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ETHNIC PASSING ACROSS THE JEWISH LITERARY DIASPORA

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ETHNIC PASSING ACROSS THE JEWISH LITERARY DIASPORA

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Dedication

Dedicated to my husband and best friend Eric, my son Lev, and my parents Alex Katsnelson and Dr. Sofya Katsnelson.

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Ethnic Passing Across the Jewish Literary Diaspora

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In my dissertation, I examine the works of six writers (George S. Kaufman, Moss Hart, Clarice and Elisa Lispector, Evgenia Ginzburg and Vasilii Aksyonov) who did not explore their Jewish identity in their texts and were subsequently left out of the canons of Jewish literature in their respective countries. My goal is to recalibrate the concept of the Jewish canon from the charged notion of identity to a theory of shared thematic material in which the works of hyphenated Jewish writers will be considered under the category of 'Jewish American, Brazilian, or Russian' if they share definite attributes. This was a transnational study showing that similar forces were at work not only in one country, but across continents, affecting the sensibilities of Jewish writers in remarkably similar ways. On a larger scale their de-thematized narratives share thematic tropes and belong to a 'minor, liminal, marginal narrative,' a narrative which attempted to work within the scope of the master narratives produced by the hegemonic culture. I have claimed that even though these six writers did not thematize identity in their texts, because of the negative political and social situation for the Jew in the first half of the twentieth century in western civilization, this situation and the writers' own alterity produced similar and overlapping narratives.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction....1
Introducing the Introduction....1
Literature Review/Historiographical Essay....2
Chapter Outline....10
Literary Passing....12
Terms and Definitions....14
Statement of Primary Sources....18
Methodology....21
Language as Identity....22
Nationality and Nationalism....23
Collaboration and Solidarity....24
Conclusion....26

Chapter II: The American Elites At Odds With Ethnicity....29
A Historical Look at Jewish Presence in New York in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s....30
A Biographical Look at Kaufman and Hart....49

Chapter III: The Great Collaborators....64
Minor Jewish Characters in the Kaufman and Hart Plays....66
The Theme of Family....72
Reorienting Ethnicity....82
Anti-Consumerism and Liberal Ideals in Kaufman and Hart Plays....92

Chapter IV: Behind the Brazilian Mask: Jewish Identity Under the Dictators....98
Go Down, Moses: The Lispector Exile and the Jewish Subaltern....100
'I also want inconsequence'....108
The Pursuit of Jewish Knowledge or Approach/Avoidance?....115
Historical Context....124
Diplomatic Immunity....131
Leaving Lasar Segall's Boat, but not the Tribe, Behind....138

Chapter V: The Novels of Clarice Lispector 148
A Place to Live in Language.....149
My Path is Others: Identity Projection in Lispector's Novels 162
Chapter VI: Purging the Semitic Self in Stalinist USSR 188
Russian-Jewish History.....191
Outside the Whirlwind.....213
Conclusion 228
Chapter VII: Intertextuality and Collaboration in Familial Narratives.....230
Writing Identity.....232
Talmudic Ties to Interrogation 243
The Good and Bad Christian.....246
Intertextuality in Aksyonov 249
Aksyonov's Christian and Jewish Selves in Flux.....253
Aksyonov's Historical Landscaping.....255
Secondary Plot 263
The Subject of Anti-Semitism 270
Conclusion 273
Chapter VIII: Conclusion.....276
Bibliography 287
Vita 297

Chapter I: Introduction

> If the religious Jew reads the rabbinic Pirke Avot on Shabbat afternoon, the argument goes, his or her secular counterpart would spend the same time with a novel by Saul Bellow. Jewish literature conceived along these lines is notoriously difficult to define, but it is generally understood to include novels, stories, plays or poems by Jews on Jewish themes or possessing an identifiable relation to ideas, images, or values associated with Judaism…Part of the appeal of this notion of secular Jewish literature, we might add, is that it preserves the traditional image of Jews as the 'people of the book,' while broadening the definition of 'the book. (Levinson 131)

> To me there are only Yiddish writers, Hebrew writers, English writers, Spanish writers. The whole idea of a Jewish writer, or a Catholic writer, is kind of far-fetched to me. But if you forced me to admit that there is such a thing as a Jewish writer, I would say that he would have to be a man really immersed in Jewishness, who knows Hebrew, Yiddish, the Talmud, the Midrash, the Hasidic literature, the Cabbala, and so forth. And then if in addition he writes about Jews and Jewish life, perhaps then we can call him a Jewish writer, whatever language he writes in. Of course, we can also call him just writer. ("Isaac Bashevis Singer")

INTRODUCING THE INTRODUCTION

My dissertation, "Ethnic Passing Across the Jewish Literary Diaspora" examines the works of writers who have extracted themselves from their ethnicity. My dissertation project is a comparative work on American, Brazilian, and Russian writers who are ethnically Jewish, who have written in the national languages of these countries, and who for the most part have been left out from the canons of Jewish writing of these countries. With a primary focus on writers of Jewish extraction who excluded Jewish identity from any of their fictional or non-fiction writing, this study examines the ways such authorial choices manifested themselves in literary texts. My project provides a new conceptual framework for the study of Jewish literature by examining writers who did not feel the urge to participate in the fostering of an overtly Jewish literature, and those who

demonstrate the ongoing tension between the pull to the ethnic background as a literary foundation versus the need to be artists who choose ethnically unmarked or masked subjects. In addition, my study is the first to survey examples of ethnically uncharged texts by Jewish writers across the geographical, linguistic, and cultural breadth of the Jewish diaspora on three continents.

The decision to make this a comparative study that considers three countries on three different continents expresses my interest in viewing the historical, cultural and sociological specificities which resulted in a similar phenomenon across geographically isolated writers. This study looks at works by ethnically Jewish authors in the twentieth century who, for a number of reasons, situated their novels, memoirs and plays in the larger cultural confines of the countries in which they were living, be it democratic America of the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, communist USSR or right-wing Brazil of the same period. How do the diverse political situations, ideologies and regimes accommodate a similar outcome in the texts of a number of ethnically Jewish writers? The choice of these countries is also a look at different populations of Jews in the twentieth century on three different continents where the majority religions (or non-religion as in the case of the USSR) were also different and extremely pronounced, the officially atheist USSR, versus Catholic Brazil, and a quasi-separated church and state in the US. While in the early twentieth century a majority of the world's Jewry resided in Europe, the subsequent effects of WWII dispersed a number of this population to Israel and the Americas.

LITERATURE REVIEW/HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

A number of writers known for their ethnically charged narratives have struggled against being labeled ethnic writers. Yet, it seems that literary critics should not be limited by the writers' own definitions of themselves, the literary critic must trust the tale,

not the teller. For example, Philip Roth stated in an interview in *The Guardian* in 2005, "But I don't accept that I write Jewish-American fiction. I don't buy that nonsense about black literature or feminist literature." Roth has also said in a famous self-description, "I am not a Jewish writer; I am a writer who is a Jew," (qtd. in Cooperman 208). Clarice Lispector (from here-on referred to as Clarice to distinguish her from her sister Elisa) is also often quoted as saying "Eu, enfim, sou brasileira, pronto e ponto" (qtd. in Vieira 117). Still, critics (Hana Wirth-Nesher, Ruth Wisse) writing on Jewish ethnicity and literature have focused mainly on authors publicly recognized as having participated through their textual subject matters in the creation of their countries' hyphenated-literatures. These authors are often termed Russian-Jewish, American-Jewish, or Brazilian-Jewish writers. My project instead looks at writers who have often been left out of the hyphenated literatures by virtue of not thematizing their own ethnicity in their works.

Although most scholars and critics have different opinions on what constitutes a Jewish literary text, Hana Wirth-Nesher in the introduction to the anthology of essays *What Is Jewish Literature*, summarizes a number of opinions in these essays about the 'Jewish text'; it must present some relationship to the Jewish experience from the standpoint of culture, religion, or language (3-12). In a talk given in Israel Cynthia Ozick notes that truly Jewish authors have been more interested in what separated them from mankind rather than in what they had in common with the rest of the world (20-35). Robert Alter asks how a critic can categorize an author "who neither uses a uniquely Jewish language, nor describes a distinctively Jewish milieu, nor draws upon literary traditions that are recognizable Jewish" (54). John Hollander, on the other hand asks, "After all, can anything a Jew experiences--even apostasy--not be 'Jewish experience?'" (37). Notwithstanding this debate, there is a tendency on the part of scholars and critics to

remove from this 'canon' the Jewish authors who did not specifically write about their ethnicity, leaving open an important area of exploration within the field of Jewish studies. Yet, the negative situation of the Jew in Western culture had predetermined this removal in literature from the group identity. It seems that the definition of Jewish writing as primarily one of exposition about Jewish culture, religion, or experience places a limit on Jewish writers which is not necessarily placed on writers of other ethnic extractions, except for writers of African ancestry.

Ruth Wisse writes that she cannot include Lionel Trilling in her work, even though his thoughts as a critic have influenced her own development as a scholar, because the hero of the novel *Middle of the Journey* is a Protestant (17). However, Wisse quotes Trilling, '"Being a Jew is like walking in the wind or swimming: you are touched at all points and conscious everywhere" (17). It would seem that Trilling's professed immediacy of identity makes a strong case for his only novel's exclusion of identity as carrying an important lesson for the study of Jewish literature. Instead, Wisse and other critics choose to deal only with the manifestations of identity that are overtly schematized in the text. Wisse notes in the preface to her book, "We will not try to re-inject into any work the lifeblood of a people that its author emptied out" (17). Must critics really contend with authorial choices? The position of critics to consider solely the authorial choice in relationship to the authors' ethnicity leaves a critical gap in scholarship. This lacunae must be filled with a look at possibly Jewish-related subject matter and allusions found in these works. It is an arbitrary decision that has kept these authors out of university curriculums where Jewish literature is taught, and from critical works and analysis. Further, Wisse writes about American Jewish literature,

> The energy of American Jewish writers was so charged, so buoyant, that for a time they appeared to dominate American fiction. But there was so little Jewish

> energy in this art that one could invent parlor games over the ethnic or religious identity of its authors: Edna Ferber? Waldo Frank? Lillian Hellman? Nathanael West? Norman Mailer? E.L. Doctorow? (25)

Similar to the definition of American-Jewish writers is the definition of Russian-Jewish writers used by Alice Stone-Nakhimovsky in her introduction to *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity*: "any Russian-language writer of Jewish origin for whom the question of Jewish identity is, on some level, compelling. I exclude by definition writers whose passport nationalities leave no trace in their work" (xii). It can be seen from the fore-mentioned examples that for the most part writers who chose to participate in a so called 'hegemonic agenda', have generally been left out from the study of Jewish literature. Furthermore, these writers are often looked down upon by other authors and critics who believe that for ethnically Jewish writers to last in posterity they must tackle genuinely Jewish subjects both in language and style, Cynthia Ozick asks:

> Why for instance, does Norman Mailer, born in a shtetl called Brooklyn, so strenuously and with little irony turn himself into Esau? Because he supposes that in the land of Esau the means to glory is Esau's means…One day he will become a small Gentile footnote, about the size of H.L. Mencken. And the House of Israel will not know him. (28-29)

It seems that such extreme criticism can only narrow the field of Jewish literature, precisely because such a great number of Jewish writers de-Judaized their characters and subject matters as a result of the negative condition the Jew had been placed in.

I would like, therefore, to base my own definition of the Jewish writer on Isaac Deutscher's idea of the Jew and the Jewish condition presented in *The Non-Jewish Jew* (1968), "The definition of a Jew is so elusive precisely because the Diaspora exposed the Jews to such a tremendous variety of pressures and influences, and also to such a diversity of means with which they had to defend themselves from hostility and persecution" (51-52). Unlike Ozick and a number of other earlier-mentioned writers and

critics who claimed that authors who did not thematize their identity were no longer Jewish authors, I will instead use Isaac Deutscher's definition of the non-Jewish Jew, "The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition" (26). The writers with whom this dissertation is concerned, exemplify the typologies of the non-Jewish Jew and manifest notions of Jewish self-hatred in their works. Yet, it is often the environment that these writers found themselves—in that forced them to de-Judaize their works; presenting this environment is one of the chief tasks of this dissertation.

The non-Jewish Jew, a term coined Deutscher, is a person of Jewish extraction who has removed himself from the greater trappings of Jewish religion, tradition and culture, nonetheless according to Deutscher this person continues to be a Jew. In attempting to define his non-Jewish Jew Deutscher gives the examples of some of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to have been of Jewish descent: Karl Marx, Lev Trotsky, Rosa Luxembourg, and Sigmund Freud. Speaking about Jewish revolutionaries Deutscher claimed "They were a priori exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures" (27). In constructing his definition Deutscher explains that it is their interest in fashioning the universal perfect man which made them reject the 'narrow' confines of their own background and embrace the everyman,

> They all went beyond the boundaries of Jewry. They all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic, and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfillment beyond it, and they represent the sum and substance of much that is greatest in modern thought, the sum and substance of the most profound upheavals that have taken place in philosophy, sociology, economics, and politics in the last three centuries. (26)

In fact, the writers that are under discussion in this dissertation followed the same formula as that which Deutscher delineates for his non-Jewish Jews. Many of them did find the traditions and laws of their Jewish upbringing too constricting.

In a letter to her sister, Tania Lispector Kaufmann, Brazilian writer Clarice, speaks out indirectly against what she sees as the narrow mindset of Rio de Janeiro's Jewish community. Tania's daughter wants to study the ballet but her relatives think that being a dancer is somehow in bad taste, to which Clarice responds that other prominent Jewish families have allowed their children to become dancers;

> No Rio as melhores familias deixam as filhas estudar. Tem uma menina judia Tamara Kapeller que, dizem, sera uma grande bailarina, tem 15 anos, começou cedo. Pense bem, querida, não se deixe levar por preconceitos tolos. Não marque desde logo Marcinha com um preconceito. (*Minhas Queridas* 121)

Clarice repeats the same warning against prejudices twice as she points out that Tania's daughter would not be the only Jewish girl to study dance. But while it is certain that aspects of Judaism and Jewish culture made the non-Jewish Jew reject his own background, it is also obvious that outside pressures were just as likely to force this figure to forge a new identity for herself. As Albert Memmi writes in his *Portrait of a Jew* (1962), "For the Jew, as for his friends, the rejection of Jewishness is a defense mechanism. It is a question of presenting the smallest possible grounds for an accusation: of making the Jew invisible" (263). As I show in the chapters on Clarice her interest in abstaining from writing a more ethnically oriented literature was also influenced by entrance into the Brazilian diplomatic community through marriage. To the exclusion of any other community in Brazil, the diplomatic community was heavily anti-Semitic (as shown by two scholarly works by Maria Luisa Tucci Carneiro and Jeffrey Lesser), and many policies that were enacted by the Brazilian government which in any way touched on the Jewish immigration into Brazil were carried out by Brazilian diplomats.

In my two chapters on Russian-Jewish writers Evgenia Ginzburg and Vasilii Aksyonov I show that it was censorship imposed on literary works from the 1930s-on

that forced writers of Jewish origin to exclude markings of ethnicity from their texts. As Rita Genzeleva writes,

> Но можно ли говорить об отражении еврейского самосознания в литературных произведениях, если уже со второй половины 30-х годов еврейская проблематика была под фактическим запретом, а советская цензура бдительно следила за выполнением гласных и не гласных антиеврейских установок? Можно ли говорить об отражении такого самосознания в художественной литературе, если писатели- евреи адресовали свои произведения массовому читателю, систематически подвергавшемуся антесимитской "обработке"? Если таким писателям следовало постоянно опасаться чреватых неприятностями обвинений в "буржуазном национализме", в пристрастии к "своим"?
>
> But can we speak about the reflection of a Jewish consciousness in literary works, if already in the second half of the 1930s the Jewish problematic was taboo, and Soviet censorship attentively scrutinized the execution of all official and unofficial anti-Jewish regulations? Can we speak about the reflection of this self-consciousness in creative literature, if Jewish-writers addressed their works to the mass reader, while systematically undergoing an anti-Semitic 'dissection'? If such writers constantly had to worry about accusations (rife with misfortune [for the unfortunate writer]) of "bourgeois nationalism" and a predilection for one's "own" [people]? (10)[1]

Yet, even though a critic like Genzeleva is aware that most Russian Jewish writers could not address their ethnicity in their works her criticism is concerned only with those writers who obviously went against institutional censorship and anti-Semitism, risking the publication of their works by including Jewish thematic material in their fiction.

While the writers that I have chosen to analyze are united in their non-thematization of Jewish subject matter in their works, they are similar in that: they all experienced the negative condition of the Jew in their personal histories; in many cases the social environment that they were a part of consisted of other Jewish artists which created for them a sort of surrogate family; finally, their works either project Jewish

[1] From here-on all texts will be translated by me unless I specifically include a citation of the work by another translator.

identity and subject matter onto members of other ethnic groups or create peripheral Jewish characters. For all the above-mentioned motives I claim that these writers should be included in the Jewish canon because their reasons constitute a unique variant of the Jewish experience. Therefore this dissertation attempts to recover the ethnicity that these writers have sometimes purposefully (to join the hegemonic majority) and at other times involuntarily (to be able to sell their works in a book market or political atmosphere that was not hostile to minority writing, or because of artistic choice) excluded from their texts, by recovering the environment and historical background that accompanied the writing of these texts, in order to examine the cultural production of ethnically unmarked texts as a widespread and powerful mode of textual representation and of the Jewish experience.

The only exception, to the criticism of ethnically Jewish authors who did not thematize identity, is in Brazil. Although a writer such as Clarice has not worked Jewish identity into the majority of her works, a number of critics of Brazilian literature (Nelson Vieira, Berta Waldman, et al.) have included her in their studies of Brazilian-Jewish literature. The critic Regina Igel, on the other hand, has left Clarice out of *Imigrantes Judeus/Escritores Brasileiros* (1997), specifically because a Jewish thematic is absent from Clarice's texts. Therefore, Brazilian-Jewish writers, their reception and the debate which has gone around them, will inform my study of other literatures where critics have left out similar writers from their studies of Jewish literature. The other writers this dissertation addresses, Ginzburg, Aksyonov, Moss Hart, and George S. Kaufman have been completely left out from the study of Jewish literature.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In my second chapter, "The American Elites at Odds with Ethnicity," I look briefly at the history of Jews in America (mostly in New York) from the 1920s-1950s, I focus on American-Jewish culture on Broadway, and provide a biographical portrait of the playwrights Kaufman and Hart. In the third chapter, I write about four major plays by Kaufman and Hart, *Once in a Lifetime* (1930), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1933), *You Can't Take It with You* (1934), and *The American Way* (1937). Although Kaufman and Hart were widely known to have come from Jewish families, almost none of what they wrote together touches on Jewish subjects. Kaufman and Hart wrote, at first glance, completely universal comedies that pandered to the interests of the American non-ethnic public. Yet, it was the culture of nativism in the America of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s that forced playwrights and writers to completely Americanize their works. Still, the writers could not completely extract ethnicity from their work, so while their plays have almost no Jewish subjects, they are almost universally about the subject of family. As Hart mentions himself in his biography, the importance of family for him is inextricably linked to his ethnic identity. Memmi explores the formation of Jewish identity through its ties to family and other members of the same ethnic group. Furthermore, Kaufman and Hart (like their counterpart in Brazil—Clarice, and in Russia—Ginzburg and Aksyonov) projected their ethnic identity onto characters who were also considered ethnic at the time, although more socially acceptable than Jews, the Irish in *Merrily We Roll Along*, and Germans in *The American Way*. These American authors are positioned in between the more extreme examples of the stripping away of the ethnic exhibited in their Russian and Brazilian counterparts.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of the dissertation I address the work of Clarice and her sister Elisa Lispector. The fourth chapter, "Behind the Brazilian Mask: Jewish

Identity Under the Dictators," provides a biographical history of the Lispectors', a survey of the history of anti-Semitism in Brazil which explains the authorial choices made by Clarice in order to purge her texts of ethnic markers and it also uses Elisa's work *No exilio* to provide a context for her sister's problematic relationship with her Jewish identity. In my fifth chapter, I look at Clarice's *A paixão segundo G.H.* (1964) and *A hora da estrela* (1977), and show that she projected her Jewish identity on her marginalized Afro-Brazilian or liminal northeastern Brazilian characters. These chapters show that while Clarice did not overtly thematize ethnicity in her work, her fiction contributes to a unique vision of Jewish experience, one that projected the author's own ethnicity onto members of other ethnic groups.

In the sixth chapter, "Purging the Semitic Self in Stalinist USSR," I address the work of two Russian-Jewish authors, Ginzburg and Aksyonov. The chapter begins by providing a context for the authors' works by looking at Russian-Jewish history from the Revolution of 1917 until the late 1970s, with a particular focus on the history of Russian-Jewish literature and its censorship in the Soviet Union in that time period, and finally a biographical survey of Ginzburg and her relationship to her ethnicity. This chapter shows that for the better part of the twentieth century Russian-Jewish writers were precluded from writing about Jewish ethnicity because of state censorship and government-condoned anti-Semitism. The seventh chapter, looks at Ginzburg's memoir *Into the Whirlwind* (1967), and supplements the reading of this work with Aksyonov's novel *The Burn* (1969-1975, published in 1980), in which Aksyonov fictionalizes his mother and himself, and in a fictional yet semi-autobiographical form writes about his mother's ethnic background. Finally, the last part of the chapter analyzes Aksyonov's novel *Generations of Winter* (1991), in which he abstains from having as protagonists Jewish characters, but at the same time manages to treat the subject of ethnically Jewish

characters and address key events and key players in Russian Jewish history, albeit in a somewhat caricatured manner. These chapters show that institutionalized anti-Semitism resulted in the authors problematizing their ethnicity: Ginzburg silenced ethnicity in her work, while Aksyonov tried to re-inject the question of identity into his work but could not provide non-stereotyped Jewish characters. Comparative political and authorial examinations of these works will finally delineate this spectrum of authorial passing (a term defined in the section below).

LITERARY PASSING

What is literary passing? Literary passing is defined as a character's rejection of his or her ethnicity in order to embrace the dominant culture. This is done for a number of reasons, such as a need to not be limited by the biases of the majority culture in the workplace, in school, or in social situations. A number of critics (Samira Kawash, Gayle Wald, Cheryl Wall, Deborah McDowell, Pamela Caughie, Steven Belluscio) have looked at the phenomena of literary 'passing' in African-American, Italian-American, Irish-American, and Jewish-American literature. Belluscio writes that as early as 1937 literary passing was used to address certain aspects in Jewish-American fiction, like choices of employment, education, and religious belonging which characters made (37). While a number of works have been written on the subject of literary 'passing' and the characters it has been instrumental in creating, nothing has been said about cases where the writers, through an exclusion of the topic of identity, perpetrated a 'passing' themselves. These are novels or other texts in which characters were de-ethnicized not because they chose to move away from their ethnicity, but because their authors chose to remove ethnic markings from the texts. What is this type of 'passing' and why has it not been discussed? If a number of African-American writers had written a multitude of novels

with white protagonists and set in a white milieu, such a phenomenon would not have escaped critical notice; a recent work by Gene Jarett, *Deans and Truants: Race And Realism In African American Literature* (2006), addresses just this phenomenon. Yet, when Jewish writers writing at the height of anti-Semitism and restrictive laws in their respective countries, de-ethnicized their protagonists and placed them in the mainstream, such a phenomenon did not elicit a pause from critics. My study attempts to fill the lacunae left by this omission and lead to a greater understanding of the many facets of Jewish literature. This dissertation will not focus on a character's passage from one identity to another, which is the most common use of literary 'passing', but what I will from here on term 'authorial passing'. I define authorial 'passing' as the author's own move towards universal themes by de-ethnicizing his/her characters, and moving away from Jewish themes or thought. Authorial 'passing' is the method used by authors to mask their own ethnicity and place themselves and their work within the majority literature. The dissertation looks at aspects of the literary texts which were informed by the authors' biographies.

The notion of an ethnic author's relationship to the dominant culture has been very important to the study of both major and minor literatures. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari note, "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16). Deleuze and Guattari then define the three major aspects of this literature, "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). Deleuze and Guattari use the example of Franz Kafka, a Jew, who lived in a Czech city, and wrote in German (which more than half of Prague spoke in Kafka's time), to exemplify the removal and extraction of the individual from his own subject, from his own work because of his ethnicity, and in order to then reclaim the

language of the other and legitimize his own right to live in a Czech city and write in the German language. I claim that the authors I have chosen, used 'authorial passing' to legitimize their own uses of Russian, English, and Portuguese, but not to reclaim these languages for the purposes of the collective members of their own ethnicity. Instead, they wanted to pass from the culture perceived as oppressed to that of the hegemonic majority-through their texts. It can be argued that they effectively embraced the identity of the oppressor. My dissertation argues against the Deleuze and Guattari model by claiming that when members of a minority literature strip their characters of identity they choose not to participate in the collective agenda of the other members of their group, but to inscribe their legacies into the cultural and literary histories of the countries they were citizens or residents of. It can be claimed that by rejecting a clear ethnic allegiance in their works these authors renounced their own ethnicity for political, psychological, religious, and literary reasons.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Two genome surveys, whose results were published last year in *Nature* and the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, point out that the genomes of Jews from Europe and the Middle East carry a majority of the same genes, dating back to the Middle East of 3000 years ago. While only around 30% of their genes are shared in common with European communities, the rest of their genetic material is Middle Eastern ("Studies Show Jews' Genetic Similarity"). Based on these studies and for the purpose of my dissertation I would like to define the Jews as an ethnic group. I would like to anticipate criticisms from those who will say that claiming a common origin for Jews subscribes to the same prejudices that were used to persecute Jews in Europe throughout history. My purpose is quite different here, it is to qualify that while Jewishness is ethnic, a person's

nomination in the twentieth century has usually been determined by the surrounding community. Memmi argues that "It is not the biology of the Jew that makes the Jew, it is not his actual physique that describes, particularizes and reveals him; it is the idea people have of the Jew that suggests and imposes a certain idea of Jewish biology" (114). Yet, unlike members of other ethnic groups who can cast off their nominations should they choose to, the members of this ethnic group who may or may not practice Judaism, who may or may not speak languages such as Yiddish or Hebrew, and who may or may not see themselves as Jewish often did not have the choice to determine their own identity; for the majority of the twentieth century their identity was not determined of their own volition but under the guidance of the greater community they lived in. In fact, I agree with Memmi's argument, the prejudices of European populations led to preconceived notions of Jewish physicality and identity which were exaggerated and served to further sectarian differences and violence. Therefore, in bringing up the genetics studies I wish only to point out that a shared ethnic background contributed to the perpetuation of shared cultural signifiers which contributed to their cultural production as writers.

Whether or not they rejected the greater Jewish community, converted to a different religion, or embraced the hegemonic group through an acceptance of the hegemonic group's values or intermarriage, has no bearing on the fact that they could not wholly cast off the markers of the ethnic group they were born into. As Memmi claims the Jew is defined not by himself or his interests but by the hegemonic group which determines his existence,

> To be a Jew is, after all, not a choice. We shall see that men often add a confirmation that gives it the appearance of a decision, but it is, first of all, a fate: to refuse that fate does not change much either, for it depends more on other men than on oneself. (Memmi 208)

In fact, I agree with this view only in terms of looking at these writers as victims of societies which were prejudiced against Jews and whose relationship towards the Jewish community determined the output of these writers.

> I can recognize myself as a Jew or pretend to forget it, I can seek to develop myself as a Jew, or attenuate or hide my Jewish characteristics. But in a certain way, I am already outside of myself; in a certain way the Jew is above all a Jew. Jewishness is first of all a collection of facts, conduct, customs which I find in myself, but especially outside of myself, throughout my entire life. Before they become the object of my choice, a decision of my will, these are in short, social facts. Their confirmation or their uncertainty, important as they may be, are supplementary steps. (Memmi 288)

For Memmi, a Tunisian Jew, who spent a number of years fighting for Tunisian independence, and then became a prominent intellectual in France, being Jewish becomes a social condition, which the 'carrier' of this condition cannot castoff no matter what other roles in life he may assume.

Memmi writes about the moment at which a Jew who has always seen himself as part of the greater community finds that in fact he is considered different and therein comes his realization of his apartness,

> Sooner or later each Jew discovers his little Jew who, according to other men, is within him. And that realization comes to him no matter what his life, his successes or his failures, no matter what he is or what he thinks he has become, and notwithstanding his pretenses, the masks he wears or even his profound metamorphosis. (Memmi 26)

In fact, all the writers under discussion here have just such a moment, when their Jewishness becomes clarified or appears in the most vivid light to themselves. It is only when they realize that others do see them as Jews, that there is no such thing as a universal being and that everyone is categorized especially when they are the minority, that their own status as Jews is elucidated. For Clarice this was the moment when she was fired from her journalistic job during the Middle East oil crisis specifically because all

Jews were let go from that newspaper. Similarly to Clarice, Kaufman was let go from his journalism job at the Washington *Times* because the owner hated Jews. For Ginzburg this time came when she saw that the internationalist and multicultural ideals (that defined the Communism of the 1920s under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky who sought to extend Communism to Europe) were abandoned when the leadership of the country began to persecute people not on a class basis which was the case at the beginning of the regime (when one's ancestral social class determined one's fate in the Soviet Union), but when ethnicity clearly marked on the 'fifth' point of the Soviet passport became a determining characteristic for promotions or demotions.

For American-Jews, Judaism is a voluntary religious identity and Jewishness is a style of being or a social identity, Brazilian-Jews on the other hand see themselves as Brazilians who may or may not practice the Jewish religion. In Russia Jews considered and continue to consider themselves an ethnic group, this was the way they were defined by the country's authorities historically; in 1991 the government of the Russian Federation finally repealed the fifth point of the passport which identified the ethnicity of the bearer of the passport. In other words, while American-Jews and Brazilian-Jews feel free to introduce themselves as Americans and Brazilians, a Russian-Jew will always cringe before introducing himself as a Russian, and in fact might elaborate and say that he/she is a Jew from Russia. While in the popular imagination the Jews remain both an ethnic and religious group, for the purpose of this dissertation I claim that Jews who have rejected their religion, nevertheless were not able to wholly reject their ethnicity.

While the Brazilian and American writers that I look at may not have outwardly embraced their Judaism (religion) and Jewishness (ethnicity), neither did they reject it outright. Meanwhile, Ginzburg converted to Catholicism and her son Aksyonov, did not know he was Jewish while he was growing up. The natural question is of course, can

people who have chosen to leave the fold still be considered Jewish. Allen Guttmann in his work *The Jewish Writer in America* (1971) writes,

> Aaron was an apostate, blotted from the Lord's book. But was he still a Jew? The question is, of course absurd, and I do not intend to venture an answer, but the vexed question of the Jewish apostate's religious identity has been raised countless times since Aaron worshipped his idol and will presumably be raised ad infinitum. (4)

Later Guttmann makes the argument that thousands of Jews who considered themselves ethnically Jewish but chose to follow a certain secular religion like Marxism remained Jews to the outside world; people like Marx, Trotsky, et. al., are still considered Jews by the greater world around them (7). The Nazis also did not take into consideration the religion of converted Jews. As Sander L. Gilman writes about Memmi's definition of being Jewish,

> The Jew is one perceived and treated as a Jew. This version of Jean-Paul Sartre's well known definition of the Jew as one seen as a Jew was suggested by Albert Memmi, who realized that in order to respond to being categorized as different, one must experience being treated as different. (Jewish Self-Hatred 11)

In the two chapters on Ginzburg and Aksyonov I will make the case that in the Soviet Union Jewish ethnicity became inextricably linked to all who bore Jewish last names and whose passports specified on the fifth point their Jewish ethnicity. Therefore, no conversion to either secular or non-secular religions, blot out the fact that Jews in the Soviet Union, no matter what their choice of religion, were seen as Jews.

STATEMENT OF PRIMARY SOURCES

A popular anti-Semitic criticism of Jewish writers and artists from Weininger to Rozanov and Hitler has claimed that these members of an ethnic group are talented but not geniuses, and that there is nothing original about Jewish artists, whether they are Heine or Mahler. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Indeed, precisely because talent isn't abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that 'master' and that could be separated from a collective enunciation. Indeed, scarcity of talent is in fact beneficial and allows the conception of something other-than a literature of masters; what each authors says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. (17)

Here the critics themselves maintain that it is not necessary for members of a minority literature to be geniuses: rather, their genius lies in representing the other members of their group. I claim that such a narrow definition of minority literature precisely defines why a number of writers such as Kaufman, Hart, Ginzburg, Aksyonov, Clarice and Elisa, among others, were not interested in participating in a minor literature. (Elisa and Aksyonov are exceptions to this rule in that they both wrote semi-autobiographical novels *No exilio* and *The Burn*, which examine their Jewish background, nonetheless Jewish subject matter is mostly absent from the rest of Elisa's works and is never the dominant subject in Aksyonov's work although he has secondary Jewish characters in some novels.)

These writers wanted to maintain their talent, and their individuality, without being forced to give it up by becoming members of a minor literature. In effect, these writers did not want to be limited by the interests of their community, which they would have had to represent had they written strictly ethnic narratives. Gilman writes,

> Self-hating Jews respond either by claiming special abilities in the discourse of the reference group or by rejecting it completely and creating a new discourse, uncontaminated, they believe, by their exclusion from it. Thus writers perceived and treated as "Jews" tend to be in the forefront of both traditional and avant-garde movements in Germany. (Jewish Self Hatred 19)

Therefore, these writers chose to sacrifice the communal goal in order to represent un-identifiable (ethnically) segments of humanity or to become members of the dominant culture and exemplify the 'national' identity of their surroundings.

Each of the chapters shows that these writers were considered 'the other' by the majoritarian population of their native countries. It will be further shown that they internalized the image of the Jew as somehow inadequate, and sought to integrate into their work the image of the perfect member of the in-group, therefore their writing reflects images of members of the in-group and rejects images of the Jewish out-group that the writer belongs to; their writing also projects their Jewish identity onto members of other minority groups, this is done because they identify their liminal status as Jews with other ethnics. As Gilman writes "Self-hatred results from outsiders' acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group—that group in society which they see as defining them—as a reality" (Jewish Self-Hatred 2). In order to assimilate and acculturate more fully in the community of the hegemonic group Jewish writers who abstained from using a Jewish narrative or Jewish characters in their work, accepted the slanted view of the Jewish community that was available, and in return accepted images of the perfect members of the majority's ethnicity.

At the same time, the blank spaces left in their works are significant because they continue to speak to the negative situation of the Jew in the larger community and to identify a peculiarly Jewish condition in their writing. In effect, it is the blank space of the missing culture/ethnicity in these author's works which is the common thread between them. Gilman writes "In this way outsiders assume many of the characteristics of the privileged group, especially with regard to themselves" (Jewish Self-Hatred 5). These characteristics become evident in the writing of these authors who wrote for the position of the non-Jewish Jew, as they demonstrate their predilection for the privileged group in their literary works.

METHODOLOGY

I examine a few major examples of texts wherein ethnically Jewish writers abstained from thematizing their own ethnicity. The texts I use are those which fit the criteria for exclusion from a list of works of 'Jewish literature' compiled by previous critics and scholars who have defined Jewish literature and its attributes. In other words, the texts will most often not have Jewish characters, and if there are Jewish characters in these works they will be liminal characters of lesser importance to the reading public. Furthermore, these texts will not speak about the 'Jewish' experience and will most often reflect the attitudes and interests of the majority of the population.

The chapters of this dissertation are divided on a geographical and chronological basis, the first two chapters concentrate on Kaufman and Hart's plays from the 1930s, the next two chapters look at Elisa and Clarice and their works from the 1940s to the 1970s, and the last two chapters examine Ginzburg and Aksyonov's works from the 1960s-90s. The chapters have three major components: the historical background of the particular country, the biographical details of the writers, and an examination of the text itself. For each writer pair one chapter examines the historical and biographical background, and the next chapter looks at the texts themselves. The historical context of each country, in particular the political ideologies, are outlined and examined as contributing factors to the decisions made by these writers. The biographical background for the writer examines his/her life experiences and influences as roots of their authorial choices. This analysis includes the psychological and critical causes, among them, conscious choice of the individual versus collective identity, assimilation and acculturation, spiritual conversion, and on the critical front, choices made between a major and minor literature and accompanying literary traditions, and the techniques of literary 'passing' and what I call authorial 'passing'. The second chapter for each writer pair examines the texts

themselves, and attempts to make a case for these writers as representative of a different and hitherto unexamined trend in Jewish literature. While analyzing these texts, I concentrate on aspects that contribute to a more inclusive knowledge of Jewish literature. Aspects of the texts examined in this regard include a textual preoccupation with questions of non-Jewish experience, ethnicity, and culture. The dissertation asks whether by their exclusion of Jewish marking these authors were making similar or different statements about the need to claim a certain identity and whether their works correspond to one another through this exclusion in other ways such as plot, subject, and symbolism, questions previous critics have not addressed.

LANGUAGE AS IDENTITY

Each of the chapters also discusses the authors' conscious decision to prove themselves in the native language of the countries that they inhabited. Gilman writes,

> The Other cannot ever truly possess "true" language and is so treated. They therefore are at pains to constantly stress their ability to understand, to write, on levels more complex, more esoteric, more general, and more true than do those treating them as "inarticulate Jews." (Jewish Self-Hatred 15)

Whether in the case of Clarice who spoke at length about her love of the Portuguese language, and whose writing was constantly called hermetic and yet transformative to the Portuguese language, or in the case of Ginzburg whose survival in the GULAGs and whose numerous friendships with other prisoners is owed to her inspiring ability to memorize libraries of Russian poetry and recite entire books from memory to prisoners starved for the spoken word, in all the cases presented in this dissertation the identification with language in a way to supplant one's identity becomes a methodological battle for these writers to claim a mainstream identity and identify with the majority. Hart, similarly was fond of memorizing stories, and it was through

recitation of fiction to his neighborhood peers that he, a slight and unsportsmanlike young man was able to win the adulation and respect of his young contemporaries.

Gilman traces the history of anti-Semitism as bonded peculiarly to the Jewish ability or inability to master their national languages; he further ties the identity of the Jews to their language in his work *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and The Hidden Language of The Jews* (1986) and notes "The Jews marginality is thus connected to their language" (70). In fact, most of the writers under discussion here had a special relationship with their national language. Hart was often made fun of by his peers for speaking with a British accent, while certainly influenced by his family's English Jewish background it might have been accentuated in order to distinguish himself from the Eastern European Jews who dominated the neighborhoods and the tenements that his family peregrinated to and from. Clarice, spoke with what she maintained was a 'speech impediment' but which might have been just a remnant of her first language being Yiddish. Finally, Ginzburg stood out among her own Jewish peers because she spoke as if she were a Russian peasant this was a source of consternation and puzzlement to her friends from the intelligentsia.

NATIONALITY AND NATIONALISM

Each of the writers presented in this dissertation sought to not only establish themselves within the fold of the national fabric but to appropriate the national identity of the majority, and therefore we have Clarice's constant search to be considered a Brazilian, and Ginzburg's association with Russian physicality and a rejection of her own background in favor of the background of her Russian husband Aksyonov. The reason behind these searches is nothing simpler than the ideal of many Jews to acquire a foothold in the majoritarian community. Memmi writes,

> For centuries Jewish populations, subjected to constant migrations, have been continually torn from the nationality they had acquired at such pains. Too often the Jew is the humble candidate for a new citizenship. Yes, too often the Jew is objectively and legally a man with a precarious nationality or about to be deprived of his nationality, a foreigner or a naturalized citizen, which is not much better. (Memmi 214)

Memmi's words are mimicked by the biographies and writing of these writers. Clarice led a concerted search to be not only identified as a Brazilian but to become a naturalized Brazilian citizen, she wrote two letters to the president of Brazil Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954) asking him to grant her Brazilian identity because she had nothing in common with the country of her birth, Russia. Ginzburg, while she writes seldom about her Jewish identity, notes several times in her memoirs how painful the 1932 law of the fifth point in the Soviet passport became for many. Both these episodes are addressed at length in the respective chapters that deal with these authors, but they are mentioned here to show that the subject of losing and gaining a nationality was one of the most important topics for Jewish writers who found their ethnicity in any way problematic.

COLLABORATION AND SOLIDARITY

In his exploration of the ethnic group Milton M. Gordon explains that such a group

> serves psychologically as a source group of self-identification—the locus of the sense of intimate peoplehood—and second, it provides a patterned network of group and institutions which allows an individual to confine his primary group relationship to his own ethnic group throughout all the stages of the life cycle. (38)

One of the modalities of Jewishness for Memmi is a sense of solidarity with one's fellow Jews, this idea he later extends to the importance of family in a Jewish mindset. Memmi posits the idea that the Jewish family nucleus is one of the chief elements in Jewish

identity, he writes, "Another defensive institution essential to the existence of the Jew is the family" (305).

Each of the writer pairs that are addressed in this dissertation collaborated sometimes overtly or covertly as is the case of Clarice and her sister Elisa, where Elisa wrote the work that spoke to the Jewishness of both sisters and the history of the family, which might have been at odds with Clarice's wishes. We also see this relationship between Ginzburg and Aksyonov, for Ginzburg, her son was the first person to hear the memoir (similarly in Clarice and Elisa's correspondence Clarice is constantly asking to see her sister's work). For Aksyonov, Ginzburg's past became a fountainhead of creative material and he based a number of his works on his mother's biography. Meanwhile, Elisa's fictional work *Corpo a corpo* (1983), about the death of a lover, was purportedly written in response to Clarice's death (Moser 308). And of course it is also this sense of solidarity and collaboration that pervades the relationship of Kaufman and Hart (the former was famously dubbed "the Great Collaborator") who wrote eight plays together.

Memmi also unites the Jewish family with the idea of Jewish relationships outside the family circle, "The family suggests family spirit and family spirit means solidarity [. . .] and here we are back again at a familiar theme" (306). In a greater sense speaking to Clarice's Jewishness is her sense of solidarity with other Jewish artists, journalists, and other notable Jewish personalities she interviewed, even though their influence on her is not obvious in her work it is nevertheless a notable part of her biography. It is members of the Jewish community who help her get a job at *Senhor* and then to deal with the loss of the job from *Jornal do Brasil*, which is attributed to Brazil's close relationship to Arab countries during the oil crisis of the 1970s.

Memmi expounds thusly on the existence of Jewish solidarity: "Jewish solidarity is in the first place one example of the vast solidarity of all oppressed persons, a defense

reaction of a particularly vulnerable group" (280). A number of the writers discussed in this dissertation express a solidarity with other with other ethnic groups; Kaufman and Hart wrote two important parts for African-Americans into their play *You Can't Take it With You*, whereas Clarice writes about an oppressed northeastern young woman in her last novel, *A hora da estrela*. I extrapolate Memmi's use of solidarity to the authors' projection of their own ethnicity onto other oppressed ethnic groups. In my definition of the modalities which make up Jewish experience and Jewish writing I unite the terms 'literary collaboration', 'social collaboration', and 'familial collaboration'.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation attempts to answer, among a number of other questions, how relevant political situations are to authors' freedom and choices. In the academy, the question of whether or not biography is important to an author's work is constantly being debated. In a recent article on the criticism that specifically looks at the Jewish aspects of Clarice Lispector's writing Naomi Lindstrom shows that even though prevailing critical opinion (as practiced by structuralists, post-structuralists and New Critics) has been against the use of biography, this academic taboo has been bypassed by the cooption of identity politics and an interest in reconsidering writers whose work reflects their status as the 'Other' ("Judaic Traces" 84-85). With my dissertation, I add another view to this question. Previously Clarice has been studied as a stand-alone writer who did not thematize her identity in her work, but whose alterity was always present in her texts, with my dissertation I show that ethnically Jewish writers who did not thematize their identity were not an exception to hyphenated-Jewish writing, in fact they were the rule. They were part of a larger community of ethnically Jewish writers who chose to subvert their identity to fit into the mainstream, to not stand-out from the hegemonic community

while the situation of the Jew in that community continued to be negative. I believe that by seeing Clarice as a writer among a larger group of writers who practiced the same de-Judaizing in their texts the area of criticism will be amplified. Similarly, by placing writers like Kaufman and Hart, Ginzburg and Aksyonov, in the company of Clarice, their works will gain new meaning as well.

In choosing to study and teach literature I have decided to probe beyond authors' intentions. It is said that history is written by the conquerors, therefore if historians study their subject closely they must probe for what has not been laid down in textbooks; they must read in between the lines. Similarly, literature also is a record of intentions and I contend that scholars must also supplement their subject with what has been left out. To understand 'Jewish literature' it is imperative to examine it in its entirety, including the many texts by ethnically Jewish writers whom the academy has chosen to exclude. I believe that it is important to the understanding of these texts to determine whether these writers were buying the assimilationist atmosphere pervasive not only in the USSR but also in the new world in the Americas, or if they were forced into making their ethnic-less textual choices. The study of these authors ascertains how important it was for them to assimilate and acculturate, and what cultural, historical, and localized forces influenced them to erase ethnicity from their narratives and how these forces were expressed in the text. Furthermore, the Russian, American, and Brazilian cultural history has a direct correlation with choices made by authors from these countries, who in choosing the mainstream culture for their literary playing field and de-ethnicizing their characters, enacted a performance of authorial passing by extracting themselves from their own racial markings, and endowing their characters with Russian, Brazilian, and Anglo-American and other ethnic traits. This decision was important not only for their literary careers but for their public and cultural survival.

Finally, the dissertation asks and answers the question of how a critic or scholar whose work hinges on ethnicity can work with a text that is completely lacking in overt allusions to an author's ethnicity? How does the critic or scholar recover an ethnicity from which the author has extracted him or herself? It has been claimed by critics in the past that one cannot assign to a writer something that he or she has chosen to disavow. However, it seems an a priori approach to argument and not sufficient. A major approach to my dissertation goes beyond this rhetorical dead end, examining the ways in which scholars can perform this type of recovery work when the will of the writer could be used as an argument in favor of staying away from this kind of critical analysis.

Chapter II: The American Elites At Odds With Ethnicity

> The story of American Jewish culture can be told as an incessant struggle to retrieve what might otherwise be hidden, to reinterpret what might not have been initially recognized as relevant, and to spurn the temptation to erect impenetrable boundaries between what belongs to Jews and what belongs to other Americans. (Whitfield 120)

> The greatest single Jewish phenomenon in our country in the last twenty years has been the almost complete disappearance of the Jew from American fiction, stage, radio and movies. (qtd. in Popkin "The Vanishing Jew")

The 1920s and the 1930s were a time of great cultural rejuvenation. Arguably the greatest American contribution to world culture, jazz, was in its heyday, and subsequently inspired rich fiction, dazzling music and unforgettable plays. This was a time when more Jewish performers, writers, and musicians began to garner the spotlight than at any time previously in the history of Jewish presence in the United States. These culture makers felt at ease with their ethnic identity in the 1920s, and the cultural production on Broadway and in Hollywood reflected a liberal and multicultural atmosphere. But the Great Depression and the rise of Hitler's Germany forced a retreat from the openness that had defined the cultural environment of the previous decade. By the time the 1930s came around entertainers and writers were not so eager to display their background in front of an increasingly hostile audience. Furthermore, in the 1930s the Jewish elite, whether in politics (where they achieved a formidable presence in the liberal government of Franklin Delano Roosevelt), or in Hollywood (most of the major studio heads were Jewish) did not encourage the flaunting of Jewish power or Jewish themes. For these reasons, and many others, it will be shown here that Jewish writers and Broadway hit-makers were discouraged from thematizing their own identity in the 1930s and 1940s.

This chapter will focus primarily on the cultural and political climate of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and make a case for why writers George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart did not explore their ethnic identity in their plays. Furthermore, this chapter will supply the biographical details of Kaufman and Hart's backgrounds in order to show that -- while the political atmosphere might have been negatively disposed towards a display of blatantly Jewish artistry and the tastes of the American public also demanded subject matter focused on homogeneity versus multiculturalism -- in their private lives Kaufman and Hart were surrounded by friends, acquaintances and family members who either represented the Jewish cultural elite or were invariably tied to the Jewish community, albeit a completely Americanized version of such a community. Kaufman and Hart might not have written plays with overtly Jewish content but before and after they won their membership among the New York cultural elite they experienced the same problems and successes that united the experiences of many members of the American Jewish community in the first half of the twentieth century: anti-Semitism, poverty, and help and financial support from that same Jewish community. In the chapter following this one I show that these commonalities did in fact lead Kaufman and Hart to write plays which covertly referenced their Jewish background.

A HISTORICAL LOOK AT JEWISH PRESENCE IN NEW YORK IN THE 1920S, 1930S, AND 1940S

Kaufman and Hart wrote the majority of their plays together from the mid-1930s to the late 1940s; therefore it behooves us to cast a glance at historical events which concerned American Jewry and more specifically New York City Jewry during those years, and that provided the formative atmosphere for their works.

In the 1920s Jews made up almost 30% of the population of New York City. By the 1940s that number had fallen somewhat but Jews still made up close to a quarter of

the city's population. Jewish identity in 1920s America ceased being a matter of Judaism or Jewish traditions; instead, it became one formed by relationships with other Jews. As important as assimilation became to these American Jews who wanted to educate themselves out of the New York City tenements, their path to the top was paved through collaboration with Jewish organizations, centers, and with other members of their ethnic group.

Jewish identity in the 1920s and 1930s cannot be separated from the American culture that was being produced by American Jews. Feingold writes about the change of Jewish culture from a culture based on religion and tradition to one that placed on a pedestal mainstream, secular culture,

> Its creators were secular Jews who were often alienated from the organized Jewish community and from the religious wellsprings that shaped its social values. Everywhere that modernity touched the community, Jewish identity was weakened, and nowhere was that more apparent than among the writers and artists who were inevitably in the vanguard of secularization. (Feingold 63)

Jewish religious life also did not flourish during the Depression, when many found it too expensive to pay for synagogue dues. Wenger writes that already a majority of Jews in New York City did not attend synagogue services during the Depression (184).

As American Jews became more American they began to lose their connection to Yiddish; by the late-1920s the number of Yiddish theaters shrank significantly. At the beginning of the decade there had been more than a dozen Yiddish theaters spread throughout New York, yet because there was less immigration in the 1920s and because second generation American Jews began to speak less Yiddish and more English, the demand for Yiddish theaters fell. Meanwhile, the development of Jewish theater on Broadway and the introduction of a number of plays with Jewish subject matter in

English began to draw the same audience that had previously attended the Yiddish theaters. Merwin writes,

> It was in this period that Jews became extremely active in all phases of Broadway. In a sense, the Yiddish theater simply moved uptown, bringing its audience with it. Jewish producers were especially prominent. An article in *The American Hebrew*, the most widely read American Jewish magazine, praised David Belasco, Lee Shubert, and Sam Harris in arguing that Jews have 'enacted an increasingly important role both in fostering the arts and in creating art'(qtd. in Merwin 67).

Kaufman and Hart were not creating their works in a vacuum devoid of Jewish culture or other Jewish practitioners who were fostering an inconspicuously ethnically-tinted American culture which on the outside was quite hegemonic. In fact, Jewish collaboration on producing and writing music, lyrics and scripts for Broadway theaters was unparalleled as compared with any other ethnic group.

Jewish participation in American theater began with the vaudeville of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of the more famous vaudeville performers were Jewish and included Fanny Brice, Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Nora Bayes, Molly Picon, the Marx Brothers, Jack Benny and numerous others. The vaudeville acts of many of these performers included satirizing and caricaturing members of the Jewish community as well as using blackface for some or assuming other ethnic identities. For example, the Marx Brothers came to be known as Italians for the characterizations that they perfected in their acts. Whereas Fanny Brice perfected a Yiddish accent for which she became quite well-known, she had never learned Yiddish growing up. The Broadway theaters were also being run by Jewish producers and impresarios, among them the Shubert Brothers, Oscar Hammerstein and Sam Harris (the man who would produce the first Kaufman and Hart play, *Once in a Lifetime,* and many of their other plays). Almost all the major musicians to write Broadway musicals during the Jazz Age were Jewish,

including Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II and Lorenz Hart, with the primary exception being of course Cole Porter.

> As in the garment industry, the early presence of Jews in the theater and music business encouraged newly arriving Jews to join their ranks. When songwriters such as Irving Berlin first tried to peddle their wares on Tin Pan Alley in the early twentieth century, the businessmen they encountered were invariably Jewish.

Most writes that because the theater was not as accessible to Protestant writers and musicians who felt that theatrical art was too vulgar for their religion, there was more space for Jewish performers, writers, and musicians to claim a space in the theatrical community (Most 17).

A large number of Pulitzer Prize winners and popular 1920s and 1930s dramaturges were Jewish, including Elmer Rice, Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, Edna Ferber, S.N. Behrman, Kaufman and Hart. Yet hardly any of their plays were Jewish in content; in fact, only two plays each by Rice and Odets dealt primarily with Jewish characters. Feingold notes, "Urban cosmopolites who wrote the new plays and books were inevitably more concerned about the cosmos than about a particular tribe within it. These writers and artists spoke of the masses but jealously maintained their apartness" (63). The majority of plays that dealt with ethnic Jewish issues were staged in the 1920s, while in the 1930s that number dropped precipitously. Those plays with Jewish subject matter that got Broadway productions included Israel Zangwill's *The Melting Pot* from 1908, Aaron Hoffman's *Welcome Stranger* (1920), Anne Nichols' *Abie's Irish Rose* (1922), Samson Raphaelson's *The Jazz Singer* (1925), *Kosher Kitty Kelly* (1925), and Elmer Rice's *Street Scene* (1929). There were also the seven *Perlmutter and Potash* plays (1917-1928). Broadway musicals like "Whoopee" (1929) and "Girl Crazy" (1930) also used minor Jewish characters that were caricatures. Meanwhile in Hollywood, Jewish producers released a number of Jewish-themed movies in the 1920s, including *The Good*

Provider (1922), *Hungry Hearts* (1922), *Salome of the Tenement* (1925), *Little Miss Smiles* (1922), *Cheated Love* (1921), *The Barricade* (1921) and *Solomon in Society* (1921).

While Jews wrote and produced musicals and plays on Broadway, off Broadway Jewish practitioners of theater were also perfecting a new blend of the dramatic arts that would shape the American acting industry. The Group Theater was organized by Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford; two of the founders were Jewish, as were the writer Clifford Odets, the composer Kurt Weill and a number of the actors (actress Stella Adler who went on to have her own famous school) who made their careers from what was just a humble beginning at the Group Theater. Feingold writes that a lot of the talent of the Yiddish stage brought their art and energy to Broadway[2], "Stella and Luther Adler's Group Theater, many of whose actors and directors came out of the Yiddish Art Theatre, was a major instrument in this radicalized Jewish infusion" (67). Jewish-influenced theater groups began to have a growing impact on mainstream American culture. Beyond the Group Theater, there was Lee Strasberg's Method School of Acting, Artef, and Arbeiter Theater Farband. Feingold credits these theater groups more for creating a Jewish theatrical culture outside of the Yiddish speaking theater than the works of mainstream Jewish playwrights,

> From the Jewish historical perspective the influence of these theater groups outweighs the contributions of individual Jewish playwrights like Samuel N. Behrman, Moss Hart, Lillian Hellman, and the most popular Clifford Odets. For these playwrights and writers, Jewishness had become only an incidental part of

[2] "The English-speaking Jewish culture that gradually replaced the Yiddish-speaking one between the wars was multifaceted and amorphous. Its practitioners were formally educated and, like its consumers, increasingly middle class. It was a culture that was moving, like the second generation itself, from 'downtown' to 'uptown.' Because its members were highly individualistic rather than folk oriented, they sustained varying intensities of interaction with Judaism. Some novelists wrote lovingly of the Jewish scene, others produced kitsch for the popular audience with little trace of their Jewish origins" (Feingold 75).

> their identity—it was not a part of their art. They were Jewishly connected in the sense that they sometimes wrote about the problems of people whose reaching for middle-class status have been interrupted by the depression or had led to catastrophe. Sometimes there was a Jewish sensibility in the humor they brought to bear or in the distinctive speech rhythms they employed. Yet they were no longer merely children of immigrants but were highly secularized and acculturated types. (Feingold 67-68)

Yet, while Feingold blames the assimilation and acculturation of Broadway playwrights for their choice to leave out identity from their works, in fact the negative atmosphere of anti-Semitism that pervaded American politics during and after the Depression is more directly to blame for writers' and producers' fears in addressing such an 'uncomfortable' subject as Jewish ethnicity.

Anti-Semitism in the United States was not pervasive in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. While there were individual cases against Jews[3], there was no government ordained discrimination. Rather, discrimination was seen on a more particular and individual basis, and it was most visible and most openly felt by Jews when they sought to pursue jobs outside of typical Jewish concentrations (like the garment industry), or when they assimilated fully and completely left their communities behind. This was especially the case with highly skilled and educated students and scholars, and anyone else that rose to the top of their fields; only closer to the top of the American elite institutions did Jews begin to feel that they were not wanted.

While in the 1920s American Jews felt more or less comfortable with their identity, there were still outside forces which sought to destroy that comfort and the self-image of the American Jew in America. The Red Scare in 1919 was directed against Communists in general but in the hands of nativist interpreters like Henry Ford, Father Charles Coughlin and the Ku Klux Klan, the attack against the reds was also an attack

[3] In 1928, there was the famous blood-libel case in Messina, New York, where Jews were accused of murdering a young girl who had disappeared from her house, but she was found well the next day.

against Jews who were portrayed as instigators of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and as fomenters of civil unrest in other European countries, and possibly in America as well. From 1920 and until 1927 Henry Ford serialized the *Protocols of Zion* and published attacks on Jews in the *Dearborn Independent*. At its height the newspaper had a circulation of 700,000, with the subscribers mostly non-urban Americans (Dinnerstein 81). Another magazine for American Protestants, *The Christian Century*, repeatedly asked Jews to convert. Similarly, the rise of Hitler in Europe and Hitler's anti-Semitic propaganda reached across the Atlantic orienting many mainstream Americans against Jews who sought to 'rule the world.'

The political atmosphere and the unstable economic situation in the country made the time ripe for right-wing ideologues, who chose to win the public over through the dissemination of anti-Semitic messages. The fundamentalist Protestants had William Dudley Pelley, who spread anti-Semitic propaganda through his Silver Legion or Silver Shirts in the 1930s. And the Catholics had as their champion Father Coughlin, who from 1938 on used the radio to broadcast his vituperative rants against the Jews, many of which were based on fraudulent documents created by the Nazis. Dinnerstein writes,

> Other anti-Semitic groups in the 1930s, several of which were also headed by fundamentalists, included the Friends of New Germany that became the German-American Bund, the Defenders of the Christian Faith, the Knights of the White Camelia ("We're for Christ and the Constitution"), the Industrial Defense Association, the American Nationalist Confederation, the James True Association, and the National Union for Social Justice. In fact, from 1933 through 1941, over 100 anti-Semitic organizations were created, as contrasted with perhaps a total of five in all previous American history. (112)

Previous to the 1920s and 1930s, only the religious right expressed the kind of hate mongering espoused by Pelley, Coughlin and the leaders of the other anti-Semitic groups, but during the Depression people from all walks of life bought into anti-Semitic

propaganda because it was easy to blame their struggles on a specific group of people. In 1939, the German American Bund took over Madison Square Garden and covered the space with Nazi flags and regalia, as well as placards with anti-Semitic slogans like, "Stop Jewish Domination of Christian America!" and "Wake up America! Smash Jewish Communism" (Dinnerstein 122). This huge display of vituperative hatred was concentrated less than ten blocks away from the heart of theatrical Broadway.

In 1921, Congress passed a strict immigration law limiting the immigration of Eastern European immigrants, which restricted the number of Jewish immigrants entering the country. Although other immigrant groups were affected as well, Jewish immigration was completely crippled by this law. Garrett writes,

> In America, particularly during the rise of nativism in the 1920s…to be 'American' was not a blank slate on which anyone could claim any unique ethnic or religious identity. To be American was to follow the model of a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. This bias was actualized in the 1921 and 1924 Johnson Acts, which created a quota system that virtually closed the door to Jews and Southern European Catholics, while continuing to keep the door wide open to Northern Europeans. (650)

Feingold writes that at the Congressional hearings on the restrictionist bill, anti-Semitic reports were read aloud prejudicing the voters on the bill against all Eastern European immigrants but Jews especially, "Compiled from the reports of the consuls in Poland, the report spoke of the Jews as 'filthy…often dangerous in their habits…lacking any conception of patriotism or national spirit.' It also warned that 350,000 to 5,000,000 of these 'low physical and mental types' were poised to flood the United States" (25). (Brazil's policies towards Jewish immigration came from similar reports.) The result of the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 was that the quota limited Eastern European immigrants (from Poland, Russia, Romania and the Baltics) to approximately 10,000 people. Whereas previously 100,000 were allowed to enter every year, between 1924 and

1931 only 73,000 Jewish immigrants came to the US (Feingold 29). As in Brazil, anti-immigration policies adversely affected the view the majority population had of Jewish immigrants, and exposed the negative feelings that government appointed personnel held against non-northern Europeans.

In 1922 to 1923, the Harvard enrollment-limitations case limited the number of Jews who could matriculate to ten percent of the admitted student body. By 1930 the college rescinded the formal quota but focused on admitting more students from the interior of the country, while the Jewish population resided mostly in urban areas (Feingold 18-24). Yet, Harvard was not the only college to block more than ten percent of Jews from entering the university; these limitations were implemented at many of the Ivies, with the exclusion of Brown University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Dartmouth. A number of public state universities also began to set quotas, including Rutgers University, and the Universities of Kansas, Minnesota, Texas, Washington and Virginia.

Yet what happened at elite universities – when Jews attempted to seek work as faculty – was far worse than the quotas set to limit the amount of Jewish students. While the number of Jewish professors (less than 100 in the 1920s) on other university faculties was limited, English departments were entirely WASP holdouts. Feingold writes, "Ludwig Lewisohn, who received a graduate degree from Columbia in 1922 but was rejected for a teaching position, looked in the mirror and noted with 'dull objectivity' his dark hair, his 'melancholy eyes,' and his 'unmistakingly Semitic nose' and he knew he did not belong" (qtd. in Feingold 21). Only in 1939 did a Jew get a position on the English faculty of Columbia University, Lionel Trilling. Dinnerstein writes that immediately a colleague came by Trilling's office asking him not to get any ideas; he would not be able to bring more Jews onto the faculty at Columbia (87).

Because some publications accused Jews of starting the October Revolution of 1917, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) "issued guidelines to publishers for the use of 'Jewish' and 'Jew'. It counseled against using these labels either for criminals or notables such as physicians, because in 'neither case has the man's Jewishness any connection with his disgrace or honor'" (qtd. in Feingold 8). Similarly, the censorship of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s sought to censor the terms by which Jews were referred to and mentioned in the press, yet in the United States it was the Jewish-founded organization (ADL) that sought to prevent extra references to Jews from appearing in the press lest this spur a new wave of anti-Semitism. This effort by a Jewish organization to not accentuate all manner of references to Jews is in concordance with Memmi's theory that the negative situation of the Jew forced the Jewish people to hide or at least not reinforce their identity. That an institution like the ADL was making a point of restricting the mention of identity points to the fact that other members of the Jewish community, in particular writers, who are typically quite sensitive to the pervading atmosphere of the day, would also choose to not have Jewish characters in their texts or at least to not refer to them as Jews.

Americans who were struggling to find jobs easily succumbed to a need to look for a scapegoat and the myths propagated by Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent* which published the Protocols of Zion and claimed that Jews controlled the purse strings of the world. New York newspapers ran Christian-only wanted ads, and many jobs with the exclusion of those in the garment industry but including almost every other industry such as at law firms, or medical and dental offices, did not welcome Jews. Meanwhile, under a new law passed under the stewardship of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, jobs for the city became open to people of all nationalities, and Jews began taking spots which had previously been slotted for the Irish. This led to an outcry from the public.

Jews were so worried about job opportunities during the Depression that the Jewish community created the Federation Employment Service (FES), Wenger writes, "The FES reported that applicants often wanted 'to know particularly those fields which are closed or open to Jews because of anti-Semitism'" (26). It was hard to get jobs and many Jews had to admit to a different religion from their own in order to get a job during the Depression. Feingold notes, "Undoubtedly such 'passing' occurred frequently, especially among highly secularized Jews who could not see why they should have to suffer for a religion they no longer practiced" (150). If such passing dominated the day-to-day activities of the country's Jewish population, it should not come as a surprise that passing was also reflected in the creative works of writers and other artists who chose not to highlight their identity in the works they created.

It was the Depression: an era of heightened union activity and political instability which forced Jews to begin to lean towards the left. Historically, Jewish involvement in the garment industry allowed them to become integrated in the unions which played an important part in New York City politics. The Jewish presence in the Socialist, Communist and Democratic parties increased at this time to its peak. Feingold writes,

> If the number of Jewish votes cast for Socialist candidates was comparatively small, most Jewish voters were usually found on the left end of the political spectrum, which ranged from communism at one extreme to a social democratic tendency—later to be known as liberalism—toward the center. . . In part, at least, it was a reaction to the nativism of the twenties. Jews considered intolerance the handmaiden of illiberalism. Having sensed the threat of the hooded Klan, Jews opted for pluralism and strict separation of church and state. (193)

Because many Jews felt the nativist threat pervading American politics in the 1930s, many opted to support multiculturalism and cultural pluralism, and as a result became interested in helping other ethnic groups fortify their standing in America in order to buttress their own place in America.

Similarly, Jewish charity and care of the other members of the Jewish community (and subsequently members of other oppressed communities) dates back to the first Jews who settled in New Amsterdam under the condition (set by Governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1654) that members of the Jewish community would take care of each other and their own poor, also known as the Stuyvesant Promise (Wenger 137). Many critics note that it was also at this time that Jews began to devote their energies to caring for others, especially the oppressed or the dispossessed. Feingold writes that "Transcending one's background to care for others is a cherished Judaic value" (214). Membership in the Communist party also included devotion to the oppressed masses of the world, "In 1934, the director of Brooklyn's Hebrew Educational Society formulated a list of 'Jewish values' that should be inculcated in club members. The list included, 'devotion to Charity (Zedakah) and a quick sympathy with oppressed humanity, as well as 'the embodiment of the principle of social justice in the world" (Wenger 110). Wenger notes,

> Some scholars have argued that the Jewish value of tzedakah (righteousness or charity) along with other religious precepts translated into political support for Roosevelt's welfare programs. Religio-cultural values undoubtedly shaped Jewish political culture, but the secular Jewish agenda, with its emphasis on social justice, reform efforts, organized labor, and public welfare responsibility, more directly influenced Jewish political sentiments. Social insurance and public welfare programs had long been tenets of Jewish socialism and Jewish labor unions. (133)

Because principles of humanitarianism became more closely associated with Jewish culture in the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish fiction such as Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930), and Jewish plays like Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing* (1935), as well as a number of Kaufman and Hart plays, focus on the negative effects of capitalism and positive attributes of the community.

While it was the smaller Jewish business owners and blue collar workers who suffered during the Depression financially, the Jewish elite began to experience the ostracism of their own members after the 1880s and increasingly by the 1920s. Both private and service clubs whose members were usually wealthy, educated elite became by the 1920s Protestant only – or gentile – only clubs, and men who had previously been members or whose fathers and grandfathers had been members became overnight socially disenfranchised. This phenomenon extended to a living situation for the Jewish elite who were often kept out of the most prestigious apartment buildings, neighborhoods and resorts. In fact, the entire phenomena of the Borscht Belt, an area outside of New York in the Catskill mountains where Jewish-owned resorts operated during the summer for Jewish vacationers, came into existence specifically because Jews could not go to other resorts in the Adirondack or Pocono mountains, which were 'Christian only' resorts (Dinnerstein 91-93).

At the same time Jews in the 1930s were becoming represented in New York City government (Mayor Samuel Levy), New York state government (Governor Henry Lehman) and the federal government (a number of Roosevelt appointees were Jewish), and the Jewish elite began to fear that as a group Jews would begin to stand out too much in politics. In 1938, Secretary of the Treasurer Henry Morgenthau Jr. and New York Times publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger asked Roosevelt to appoint a non-Jew to the Supreme Court instead of Felix Frankfurter, as they felt that "putting a second Jew on the Court would only play into the hands of anti-Semites at home and abroad" (qtd. in Wenger 130). It is shocking that members of the Jewish cultural elite would handicap prominent members of their own community, yet it is a fact, once again as Memmi has noted history shows that for the American Jew in the 1930s his Jewishness was a negative condition. Feingold writes that Roosevelt's New Deal was often called the "Jew

Deal" partly because of the public's fears that Jews were in charge of the country and because of the makeup of Roosevelt's cabinet. A few members of the cabinet were Jewish and had a good deal to do with the drafting of the New Deal: secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., legislator Benjamin Cohen, speech writer Samuel Rosenman and Felix Frankfurter, one of the drafters of the Social Security Act of 1935 (216-17). Feingold writes that according to polls taken during WWII, 60 to 65% of the American public believed that "Jews had too much power" (216).

Yet, when writing about the relationship of powerful American Jews to their Jewish identity in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s it behooves us to look at individual cases of the elite to see how they maintained contact with their culture or cut off all ties to other members of their ethnic group. Feingold writes that Felix Franfurter "virtually discontinued all contact with Jewish circles after 1939" when he was appointed to the Supreme Court (219). The actions of politically appointed Jewish members of Roosevelt's cabinet parallel the actions of the Jewish elite in other spheres of American cultural influence, and show the ambivalence that American Jews exhibited when they had achieved positions where they could benefit other members of their ethnic group. It was upon reaching that place of power that most of these American Jews put their Jewish identities to the back seat, because they would have been accused of working for the benefit of their own group; instead they began to work solely for the majority,

> Rabbi Stephen Wise, who frequently transmitted the Jewish concern to the administration was exasperated by these 'sha sha Jews,' by which he meant Jews highly placed in the administration who were reluctant to speak of Jewish matters in the Oval Office…Even when they could distinguish a Jewish interest, they would not jeopardize their hard-won positions to advocate it (Feingold 219).

Feingold writes about the feeling of American Jews towards the news they were hearing about Nazi Germany in the 1930s,

> The more established 'uptown Jews', associated with the Reform movement and the AJCOMM, were usually further along the acculturation continuum. They continued to feel some concern for their 'brethren' but it was less often reinforced by direct family ties than it was with 'downtown' Jews, nor could they any longer identify with the all-encompassing ethnic Jewishness, the 'tribalism' of European Jews. (234)

The Jewish elites, many of whom belonged to descendants of German Jews who had immigrated in the 1820s and 1830s, but also wealthy Eastern European manufacturers, were embarrassed by their association with the Eastern European Jewish masses who had come to the United States more recently and who would reverse the long and hard process by which the German Jews had been able to assimilate over the course of the nineteenth century. The Jewish elite sought to reassure the majority that Jews were just like everyone else, and this meant that in the 1920s and 1930s they assumed the agenda of not standing out, "When Julius Rosenwald [one of the largest shareholders of Sears, Roebuck] told a friend that he was not 'in the least anxious to see many Jews in politics or even on the bench,' he spoke for most of his class, for whom high public profile as Jews was anathema" (qtd. in Lewis 25). (Sears, Roebuck was one of the many major department stores which did not hire Jews.) It was because of these sentiments that Morgenthau and Sulzberger discouraged Roosevelt from raising Frankfurter to the bench, and that the ADL discouraged journalists from highlighting Jewish identity in the press, media, or the arts. Furthermore, the Jewish elite saw it expedient to support the nascent African American civil rights movements and organizations in order to assure a safe future for their own assimilated community without constantly reminding the majority population of the existence of the Jews,

> By assisting in the crusade to prove that Afro-Americans could be decent, conformist, cultured human beings, the civil rights Jews were, in a sense, spared some of the necessity of directly rebutting anti-Semitic stereotypes, for if blacks could make good citizens, clearly, most white Americans believed, all other groups could make better ones. (Lewis 31)

Jews were instrumental in the founding of the NAACP and a number of other organizations. They raised money and helped organize new efforts to gain civil rights. This fact also corroborates Memmi's theory of Jewish solidarity and collaboration with other oppressed masses, spoken about in the introduction.

During World War II, the sense of Jewish alienation continued. There was discrimination in the army against Jewish soldiers by soldiers of other nationalities, cases that were later fictionalized by writers like Norman Mailer in *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), and in Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* (1958). Similarly to the anti-Semitic ditties that were popularized during the war in Russian (which all purported that while Ivan died at the front Abram sat out the war in Tashkent), the American version did not vary in originality from its Russian copy, "The first American soldier to kill a Jap was Michael Murphy/The first American bomber to sink a battleship was Captain Colin Kelly . . . /The first American to get new tires was Abe Cohen" (Dinnerstein 139).

As a result of the negative atmosphere that the Depression, joblessness, nativism, anti-Semitism, and Nazi propaganda created for American Jews, the cultural scene from the 1930s-1950s became almost completely devoid of portrayals of Jews. While the Yiddish theater and American Jewish vaudevillians of the teens and 1920s were unabashedly Jewish in the portrayal of members of their own community, this naked look at the Jewish environment could not be found in the serious theater of the 1930s,

> In the increasingly volatile political atmosphere of those years, many Jewish creators of popular entertainment felt compelled to obscure their own Jewishness and to tone down or eliminate ethnic characters. A dramatic rise in anti-Semitism in the United States and abroad created unease and instability for comfortably acculturated American Jews like Rodgers and Hart . . . Jewish writers and producers feared that audiences outside urban areas would react negatively to Jewish characters, and they felt that the best way to combat anti-Semitism politically was to keep all matters relating to Jews as quiet as possible. (Most 69)

Compared to the 1910s and 1920s, when Jewish figures and Jewish thematic material were important to vaudeville and American comedy, in the 1930s these figures almost completely disappeared from the Broadway stage. Many of the famous Jewish vaudevillians[4] went to Hollywood where they had to de-emphasize their ethnic acts which did not do so well with the mainstream American culture during the volatile political atmosphere in the US and abroad. Rogin writes that Jewish entertainers who maintained a Jewish identity on screen and on stage into the mid and late 1930s found it hard to sustain an audience,

> But Jewish jokes reduced the popularity of the movies [Al] Jolson made after *The Singing Fool*. Instead of progressing forward to the deracinated American identity promised in *The Jazz Singer* and realized in *Sonny Boy*, the later movies reverted to Jewish vaudeville. Eddie Cantor, who had also moved from vaudeville to Hollywood, became one of Universal's top moneymakers while Jolson released flop after flop. Cantor sustained his popularity in the 1930s by no longer playing the Jew. Jolson's Jewish self-exposure went too far not because of its method but because of its particularistic content. Audiences were turning away from the focus on ethnic conflict, not from masquerade itself. (Rogin 190)

There were a few plays with Jewish characters that appeared at this time but they were in the minority. These were Elmer Rice's *Counsellor-at-Law* (1931), *Men in White* (1933), Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* (1934) and *Awake and Sing*, *Bury the Dead* (1936), and *Having a Wonderful Time* (1937). Merwin writes that this decline in Jewish themes was precipitated by the Depression,

> The Great Depression essentially brought the Golden Age of Jewish entertainment . . . to an end. The ethnic joie de vivre that characterized Jewish popular entertainment gave way to somberness and introspection that lasted through the 1930s. Crude ethnic stereotypes began to fall out of favor; negative Jewish stereotypes particularly declined in the wake of the Holocaust. The heady, giddy celebratory aura of American life in the Jazz Age began to dissipate. (162)

[4] "Outside of New York, however, many in the entertainment industry, particularly in film, saw the need for Jews to reduce overtly ethnic characterizations. Henry Jenkins has studied the changes in Eddie Cantor's screen persona through the course of his career, finding that Cantor had to tone down the overtly Jewish content and style of his performances in order to succeed with the national audience" (Merwin 164).

While it is true that the Great Depression dampened the spirits of the entertainment industry, and certainly affected the way Jews wanted to be perceived by the American public, I have tried to show that it was the overall effect of the political atmosphere in the 1930s and 1940s that forced Jewish artists to retreat into their American identities and made the Jewish public seek acceptance in the mainstream culture by rejecting their own differences from that culture. The history of absence of Jewish material on Broadway in the 1930s and 1940s is paralleled by a similar lack of Jewish-themed films in Hollywood.

In the 1930s Jewish-themed movies (like all other outlets of mainstream Jewish culture) disappeared from the screen. Cohen writes that Jewish Hollywood producers in the 1930s wanted to stay as far away as possible from ethnic material because of their own too-close connection to their ethnic past,

> Indeed in the 1930s at the height of Jewish control of the movie industry—the period of uncontested rule by such moguls as Adolph Zukor, Jesse Lasky and B.P. Schulberg at Paramount; William Fox at Twentieth Century; Louis Mayer and Samuel Goldwyn at MGM; Carl Laemmle and Harry Cohn at Columbia and the Warner brothers at their own studio—there was a concerted effort to ban most Jewish subject matter from Hollywood films. To escape from their Jewish immigrant backgrounds, the moguls eliminated all traces of it on the screen. To confirm their new-found identities as devoted United States citizens, their pictures reflected the America of their heart's desire—a place where people have the same non-distinctive names, speak the same unaccented language, and share the same undivided national loyalties. Eager to win the favor of that vast unseen audience somewhere in the center of the country, the studio heads had Jewish actors and actresses change their names to less Semitic ones. (12)

The fact that Broadway and Hollywood producers did not want to be associated with ethnic material that would highlight their own backgrounds underscores the point that the closer that members of an excluded ethnic group got to the wealthy and privileged elites whom they tried to emulate, the more they tried to distance themselves from New York tenements and Eastern European shtetls.

In the threatening political environment of the 1930s and 1940s, Hollywood was often blamed for corrupting the moral values of Christian America, yet Feingold writes,

> Interestingly enough, 'Jewish' Hollywood, which frequently bore the brunt of anti-Jewish hysteria, was little interested in the group prejudice theme. Between 1933 and 1940, few films about prejudice or Jewish life were produced. When Germany, which composed 10 percent of the film industry's export market, banned films featuring the names of prominent Jewish actors, studios simply changed such names or omitted them. (256)

Hollywood was afraid to challenge the subject of anti-Semitism head-on. Like the political elites during the Roosevelt administration who felt that the best weapon against anti-Semitism was not reminding the hate mongers about the existence of Jews at the top, the Hollywood elite felt that movies sans Jewish subjects or Jewish actors would also do more to protect the country against nascent ethnic hatred than any other kind of battle with it,

> Responding to the Nazi seizure of power, and to the fascist sympathies of the Hays/Breen Production Code Administration (the industry group with the power to censor films), the Jewish moguls evaded anti-Semitism by simply eliminating Jews from the screen. Warner Bros. won its first best picture Academy Award in 1937 with *The Emile Zola Story*. Although the studio depicted the Dreyfus Affair, it cast the Jewish actor Paul Muni as Zola rather than Dreyfus, and allowed no one to speak the word Jew. (Rogin 209)

It speaks to the fear that Hollywood producers had of emphasizing the Jewish presence in the United States that even when addressing Nazism, anti-Semitism was not discussed by the movie industry until *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Crossfire*, both from 1947.

Similarly, Henry Popkin in his influential article "The Vanishing Jew in American Popular Culture" noted that the Jewish figure in American film has been de-Judaized from the mid-1930s to 1952 (the year he wrote the article). He claimed a number of reasons for this but chief among them the fear by producers of movies and the public that too many Jewish figures presented to the American public breeds anti-Semitism. Popkin

wrote that although there were a good number of movies with Jewish characters in the 1920s, in the 1930s cinema became de-Judaized, "Then came the great retreat. By 1935 most of the Jewish comedians had vanished from the screen." He also notes,

> The comic villains of George S. Kaufman's *The Butter and Egg Man*, a character named Lehman, retained his original name when the play was filmed under its own title in 1928 and as *The Tenderfoot* in 1934; but in 1937, when the play had another metamorphosis as *An Angel from Texas*, he became Allen. ("The Vanishing Jew" 51)

Popkin lamented the disappearance of the Jewish figure in film well into the early 1950s, yet by this time Jews had begun to fortify their presence in American culture.

In addition to *Gentleman's Agreement* and *Crossfire*, a number of novels by Jewish writers began to deal with the subject as well. In Brodkin notes that it was after World War II that American Jews entered the mainstream,

> By the late 1940s, not only did economic and social barriers to Jewish aspirations fall away but the United States, perhaps in part from guilt about having barred Jews fleeing the Nazis, perhaps in part from a more general horror of the Holocaust, became positively philo-Semitic in its embrace of Jewish culture. (141)

In fact the 1950s heralded an emergence of an American culture that was arguably led by the Jewish left. Brodkin writes that many public intellectuals (the New York public intellectuals) and writers, who were considered the epitome of being American in the 1950s and 1960s, were Jewish: J.D. Salinger, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud (142).

A BIOGRAPHICAL LOOK AT KAUFMAN AND HART

Kaufman was one of America's most successful playwrights in 1930 when at the insistence of producer Sam Harris he conceded to collaborate with the young and promising Moss Hart. At the time Hart had not written anything of note, there had been a regional show and plays he had written for Jewish community theaters. Why had

Kaufman chosen to collaborate with an unknown? It is possible that he saw a lot of potential in the play that was presented to him and that needed to be doctored, *Once in a Lifetime*, at the same time he might have wanted to help out a young Jewish playwright who was just starting out. Bach writes about Kaufman and Hart "They had very little in common at twenty-five and forty besides being tall, dark, and Jewish" (56). But in fact their mutual Jewishness was quite a big common ground on which was reflected their background in Jewish theater groups, their love for literature, their sharp wits, as well as other values that were attributable to members of the Jewish community. Their creative alliance was the most successful mutual collaboration of their careers, leading to eight plays and a shared Pulitzer Prize. They became each other's closest friends and partners in financial efforts and theater ownership. Kaufman and Hart owned houses close to each other in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania; Hart spoke the eulogy at Kaufman's funeral; and finally, probably the greatest sign of all to the closeness between the two men, Hart's biographer suggests that his death several months after Kaufman was precipitated by the trauma at the death of his friend, a man who became almost a father figure.

Kaufman was born into a family of prosperous German Jews from Pittsburgh, in 1889. The German Jewish community, the majority of whom had immigrated in the 1820s and the 1830s had by the beginning of the nineteenth century become completely assimilated and "had become decade by decade less distinguishable from other white Americans" (Lewis 20). Kaufman's grandparents had immigrated to the United States in the first part of the nineteenth century. Kaufman's father Joseph held many jobs throughout his life, and was never happy with one field, he fought Indians, worked in silver mines, steel mills, foundries, at a dyeing company and adored literature, especially Voltaire, whereas Kaufman's favorite author was Mark Twain.

Moss Hart was born into an English Jewish family in the Bronx. His grandparents immigrated from England, leaving behind the wealthy English Jewish family of Samson or Solomon who were originally Dutch Jews,

> The Solomons he came from were a generation removed from Holland, where they had been silversmiths in Amsterdam. The original spelling had been Salamon or Salaman. In England, Barney's older brother Joseph, alas mercurial and more prudent Solomon, worked his way from apprenticeship in a leather factory in Bermondsey to ownership of one of his own. (Bach 5)

The Solomons became a very prominent family in England: among them were members of the Royal Academy and a famous violinist. One of Hart's biographers, Steven Bach, notes that Hart's grandmother might not have been Jewish, Rose Lewis, but does not know for sure[5] (5). Bach writes about Hart's grandfather,

> He was, as a matter of fact, the black sheep of a large and quite wealthy family of English Jews, and he had apparently at a very early age alienated himself from each and every one of them, finally ending all family ties in a burst of rebellion that settled him for good and all in America. (9)

This rebellious grandfather would later inspire one of Kaufman and Hart's most famous characters Grandpa Vanderhof, the imperious yet eccentric man at the helm of the Vanderhof family. The Hart family household in the Bronx included the grandmother, grandfather, two daughters (one of whom was Hart's mother) the other his aunt Kate, Hart's father, and his crippled brother, who later became his stage manager.

The Hart family, though poor, was characterized by a number of family members who were readers and who inspired Hart to devote his life to literature. Hart notes that his grandmother's chief pleasure in life was being read to by his grandfather, but that his grandfather was able to terrorize his grandmother by sometimes refusing to read to her, or

[5] This does not seem to be right, for Hart considered himself "racially Jewish" a qualification one would use only if by Jewish law he would have been considered a Jew (a qualification used specifically if the mother and her maternal line are Jewish.)

by skipping ahead in the Charles Dickens narratives so that she would not know what happened in the different parts of the novel (10). His aunt Kate, on the other hand was responsible for his love for the theater, for it was she who introduced him to the joys of theater when he was a young boy (and he would return the favor once he became an office boy at one of the Broadway theaters). Once Hart turned seven his aunt began taking him to the theater with her, on Thursdays and Saturdays they would make their excursions to the Alhambra Theatre and the Bronx Opera House (19). The theatricality and histrionics that Aunt Kate used in order to impart her reflections of an evening spent in the theater were not lost on the young Hart,

> My mother and I always waited up for her return, and then she would recreate the entire evening for us. She was a wonderful reporter. She had a fine eye for irrelevant detail and a good critical sense of acting values. Her passion for the theatre did not include being overwhelmed by it, nor was she a blind idolater of stars. (Hart 18)

To pay for her addiction to the theater Kate asked her rich English relatives for a regular monthly sum, "This she used exclusively for tickets and books, and come hell or high water not one penny of it was ever touched otherwise" (Hart 18). And it was over books that aunt Kate lost her place in the Hart household, she had given away books about Eugene V. Debs, (the hero of Hart's father), which were given to Barnett Hart by a tenant, and Barnett could never forgive her, so rare was a gift of books at the time. The episode led to Aunt Kate's ejection from the household and the end of Hart's adventures at the theater until he was old enough to get a job there.

Similarly, to Hart's experience with Aunt Kate as the proselytizer for theater, Kaufman was turned onto the legitimate stage by his Sunday school rabbi, J. Leonard Levy, who inspired Kaufman to play some of his first roles at the community theater that neighbored their synagogue (Teichmann 28). As was shown in the theater section of this

chapter, secular culture, and popular theatrical entertainment began to supplant Jewish culture and Judaism in the minds of many Jews at the beginning of the twentieth century. Then in 1903 Kaufmann collaborated on his first play with another Jewish Pennsylvania boy, Irving Pichel. Together they wrote *The Failure* which premiered at the Rodeph Sholom Community House (Teichmann 80). Like Hart, Kaufman's first theatrical explorations were at Jewish venues; essentially it was their Jewish community which first saw their potential as playwright and directors.

Reading and telling stories defined Hart's identity among the mainstream population of non-Jewish boys. Like Ginsburg's role among the prisoners in the GULAG, where she was able to help people keep their sanity and define their attachment to the Russian language and identity by reading memorized works of literature like *Eugene Onegin*, Hart played the same role for the boys of the neighborhood. Not popular and a bookworm, he was almost never asked to participate in the games the other kids played, yet the books he was always reading interested them, and when approached by one of the curious kids he began retelling the novels he knew so well,

> The book was *Sister Carrie* and I told them the story of Sister Carrie for two full hours. They listened bug-eyed and breathless. I must have told it well, but I think there was another and deeper reason that made them so flattering an audience. Listening to a tale being told in the dark is one of the most ancient of man's entertainments, but I was offering them as well, without being aware of doing it, a new and exciting experience. (31)

Participating in the majoritarian language and literature, was the way many Jews, and especially the literary Jews this dissertation deals with, were able to cement a place for themselves in the hegemonic community.

Sander Gilman writes "Jews were thus always forced to show that they could both speak an acceptable language and speak it better than their non-Jewish contemporaries" (*Jewish Self-Hatred* 18). Although English was Hart's native language, his British accent

made him stand out from his peers, leading to jeering remarks; in effect dominating the classics of English and American literature was Hart's way of showing that he had legitimate claims on American culture. Hart writes about being made to recite the classics to his grandfather,

> I would stand on the table, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes, and as soon as I could collect myself, I would proceed to recite one of his favorite bits form *A Christmas Carol*, which he had taught me during the preceding week, and once, I believe, at the age of five, I did him proud by belting into *Hamlet*. (13)

Proving a legitimacy in the English language through mastery of the classics must have been carried over from England by Hart's grandfather Solomon. Hart's grandfather read to him from *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, and he forced him to recite from memory. Later when he was working as a director at the Labor Temple he would go to the New York Public Library and read plays all day long, "When my neighborhood library in the Bronx ran out of published plays, I went down to the main branch at 42nd Street and sat in the reading room all day long, completely and utterly absorbed" (Hart 125).

While the writers presented in this dissertation seem to come from very disparate backgrounds, the alienation that most of them felt from the majoritarian community comes through in a lot of their autobiographical writing. Like Clarice Lispector whose accent and foreign sounding last name was alien to her fellow writers, Hart writes about experiencing his difference from his peers because of his first name and his accent,

> At school I was a lonely and alien figure. My given name, to begin with, was a strange one, and children are quick to hold suspect and to damn anything different from themselves, even a name. Added to this was the fact that I spoke with a faint English accent; and my manner of speaking, I'm afraid was a trifle too literate, if not downright theatrical—the one a heritage from my family, the other a carry-over from Thursday and Saturday afternoons at the Alhambra Theatre and the Bronx Opera House. (20)

His thoughts resonate with the fictional dilemma presented by Vasilii Aksyonov in The Burn, when the problematic Jewish sounding last name that the protagonists' parents had sought to hide is unmasked during class. Kaufman in turn always corrected people who tried to pronounce his way in the German way, as Koffman (the name had originally been spelled in the German manner with two nn's). In a remark about his own name, he was credited with saying "Kaufman is a very popular name. In fact, Lee is Kaufman in Chinese" (qtd. in Teichmann 71). As for accents, like the one Hart says he was ridiculed for, that was not a novel occurrence for Jews in any country. Evgenia Ginzburg's Jewish friends commented on her foreign sounding diction which almost attempted to force an identity of a Russian, a peasant. While in Hart's example we also have the writer who either chooses to present a foreign accent to his peers or is an unwilling participant in the accent thrown on him by family circumstances.

Yet, outside of Hart's informal education at the library and the theater that he was taken to, Hart had almost no formal education. He left the eighth grade at the age of fifteen in order to work and help support his family. His job trajectory took him everywhere from working in the fur business, a music store, and to the garment industry. A lot of the jobs he landed came through Jewish family connections. Finally, his first legitimate job at the theater he landed when his neighbor, a kid from the neighborhood did not show up for work, Hart became the office boy for Broadway producer Agustus Pitou. And from there with the help of his friend Edward Chodorov wrote his first play, *The Hold-up Man*.

Through Chodorov's guidance, Hart's main intellectual influences became Jewish theatrical personalities like Meyerhold and Reinhardt. Edward Chodorov, Hart's friend and in some ways teacher introduced him to the innovations developed by the two great directors, "Chodorov, who owed his job working backstage on *Abie's Irish Rose* to Moss,

repaid the debt with expansive dissertations on Meyerhold and Germans like Max Reinhardt…" (Bach 34). Later Chodorov took Hart with him to the Borscht Belt resorts where they became impresarios.

One way for Chodorov and Hart to gather material for their Borscht Belt gig at Camp Utopia was to see as many new shows as possible, of these the Ziegfield Follies was the most popular and Hart would gather Fanny Brice skits in order to impersonate her later at his job (Hart 131). His impersonations included doing a Fanny Brice skit as 'Mrs. Cohen at the Beach' (150). In the skit Mrs. Cohen examines her Jewish identity and her relationship to her husband and her children; she presents her husband as a weak man, while she the woman holds the reins in the family, it is an "oppressively close Jewish family with its often ineffectual father and domineering, overprotective mother" (Grossman qtd. in Merwin 51). In fact Memmi, writes that the father is weak in Jewish works because the society of the oppressor has emasculated him, he notes, "Through such a paradox the Jewish father may appear even today to be one of the most terrible, he who is socially so weak—which is why the works of Jewish authors almost always resound with the conflict of the father" (310).

Similarly in a number of Kaufman and Hart's work it is the woman who is in charge, Julia in *Merrily We Roll Along* gets this stage direction from the writers "She is a person", a direct translation from the Yiddish which we have also seen in Clarice Lispector's work. And May Daniels in *Once in a Lifetime* is also the protagonist who sees through all the subterfuge and the lies, and who holds the friendship/family together. Once again the construct of the Jewish family, which Hart learned in his own family experience, and which was probably a reason for his choice of 'Mrs. Cohen at the Beach' as his favorite skit to perform in camp, kept coming up in his fiction.

His milieu from these summers working the Borscht Belt was almost completely Jewish. Hart worked for a time at the Flagler Hotel which he affectionately referred to as "Hebrew Tech" (qtd. in Bach 45), considered one of the best hotels on the circuit, which competed only with Grossinger's the most famous of all the Borscht Belt hotels, and which had a fully stocked kosher kitchen. He writes,

> My position as King of the Borscht Circuit was largely undisputed. My chief competitor in the field was one Don Hartman, the social director of Grossinger's Hotel—a curious quirk of circumstance, considering the fact that Dore Schary was to become head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Hartman the head of Paramount Pictures. (234)

About working at the summer camps for six summers in a row Hart notes, "Out of the summer camps of those early days emerged such figures as Danny Kaye, Don Hartman, Dore Schary, Lorenz Hart, Garson Kanin, Artur Kober, Phil Silvers, and countless others" (138). In New York City of the 1920s and 1930s where roughly one fourth of the population was Jewish (the exact figures were given in the previous section) it was almost impossible to not be surrounded by Jewish friends and colleagues.

While being an impresario on the Borscht Belt Circuit he was also directing theater groups at two Jewish community centers. From his directing gigs at the "Park Players", to two groups at Brooklyn's YMHA and the Center Players at the Jewish Center in Brooklyn, to the Borscht Belt and finally to Broadway itself almost all of Hart's milieu on the way to the top was Jewish and almost every person on that path to help him pursue his career shared a very similar identity to his, in fact historians agree that Jewish identity in the New York City of the pre and post-Depression era was formed by the tendencies of Jews to surround themselves with other members of their ethnic group, "while 1920s-1930s Jews at home on the Bronx's Grand Concourse might never set foot in their local synagogues…they could still spend their lives among Jews" (Gurock qtd. in

Merwin 8). His directing debut with the "Park Players" he received from a cousin's husband who was a rabbi in a synagogue in Brooklyn, the other directing jobs came from Jewish community centers like the Young Man's Hebrew Association and the Jewish Centers first in Brooklyn and then in New Jersey (Bach 39).

> [. . .] Where you find one Jew, you are sure to find others. Jews have a tendency to gather in groups. In primary school, in high school, we preferred to have Jewish friends. My friends among the professors have often confirmed that. The partitions are fortunately not tight, but in general young Jews tend to go together. (277)

Various facts from Hart's biography point to the presence of a larger Jewish community which oversaw his career from start to finish: his friend Lester Sweyd showed the play *Once in a Lifetime* to Miss Frida Fishbein a nimble agent at the time who placed the play with Max Siegel, Sam Harris's producer (Hart 261). Even when Hart was introduced to Kaufman's circle, the majority of those playwrights and luminaries were also Jewish, Harpo Marx, Edna Ferber, and George Gershwin.

Hart (like Ginzburg) rarely comments on his Jewish identity in his biographical work, except he includes a comment that Chodorov made when the two were accepted to become camp directors at Camp Utopia, Eddie said "'I bring you incontrovertible proof that He who watches over Israel does not slumber,' he said, talking into the mirror. And as I turned around to look up at him he whispered, 'We got the job'" (Hart 129). In another telling remark by Hart that is somehow reminiscent of the narrator's words on her punishing ancestry in Clarice's work *Agua Viva* (discussed further in this dissertation), Hart, once again without mentioning Jews specifically speaks about the closeness and the bonds of family, which can only be understood by him as having something to do with his ethnic background,

> I have always had a strong, almost an overpowering, sense of family unity. Its roots are perhaps racial and lost in the atavistic past of a people whose history is a

> stern one; or it may be that I had inherited a good deal more than I suspected of my mother's own deep feeling of family ties. (Hart 222)

This quote refers to an episode in Hart's life when he, his brother and his father were cheated out of their summer wages by an unscrupulous summer camp owner, and returned to New York with no money upon which to resume their lively-hoods. Hart was able to borrow a sufficient amount from a Jewish entrepreneur, Joe Hyman (to whom he promised the future possibility of producing his plays) to save his family from being homeless. Yet the experience of being homeless during the Depression was not Hart's alone, Wenger writes that a the fate of Hart's family who left their apartment in the Bronx and relocated to Brighton Beach, was a uniquely Jewish situation, "During the Depression, many Jewish families moved from one apartment to another, sometimes relocating with changing financial fortunes, and other times moving simply as a money-saving measure" (46). At the same time these families always maintained a sense of Jewish community by moving specifically to places populated by other Jews, "As one Forward reporter explained, '90 out of every 100 Jews…seek a Jewish [apartment] house, situated on a Jewish block, in a Jewish neighborhood" (qtd. in Wenger 81).

Yet if Hart seldom mentioned Jewish identity in his biography, this does not mean that he was not touched by the current events or forgetful of the negative condition of Jews in America and abroad. Hart worried about the Holocaust, in a letter written to Dore Schary in May of 1941, he wrote about the unfolding events in the European theater which could lead "to find either you or myself the social director of some cheap concentration camp" (Bach 232). When Ben Hecht gathered a group of leading Jewish cultural figures to discuss what could be done about the anti-Semitic actions taking place in Europe only Hart and Kurt Weill agreed to help out, "I thought I'd tell you,' Moss told

Hecht that evening, 'that if I can do anything definite in the way of Jewish propaganda, call on me'" (qtd. in Bach 237). As Memmi writes,

> [. . .]Jewish solidarity does not exhaust itself in passive positivity; it contains more than that. It does not confine itself to discovering other Jews, to a more or less vigorous approval of Jewishness. Most of the time it acts. And that actions is not only a defensive reaction to a negative destiny, it is also its positive reverse, a reassuring basic principle, auxiliary to the life of the Jew. (277)

Hart's solidarity with international Jewry led to one of the only major events in America to address in a large-scale format the genocide in Europe. In the same venue, Madison Square Garden, where pro-Nazi groups had held their anti-Semitic rally in 1939, Jewish groups in 1943 held a two day pageant *We Will Never Die* written by Ben Hecht, with music by Weill and directed by Hart.

Hart was certainly always cognizant of anti-Semitism and his friends were careful not to offend him, some even going so far as to remove luggage tags from Hitler's Germany when visiting his country estate. The one episode that is quite stark in its anti-Semitic brutality (and that most prominently shows that Jews no matter what status they achieved were always at the mercy of anti-Semitic sentiments or of being seen as the "other") is an altercation that Hart had with Rex Harrison the star of both the film and original theater production of *My Fair Lady* (1964), when the former was directing the play in London, "'You Jewish cunt!' he [Harrison] screamed at Moss in front of the other members of the production, going on to make the outrageous claim, 'If it hadn't been for me you would never have got this job directing the show in the first place'" (qtd. in Bach 361).

Only in 1947 would Hart again, and for the last time involve himself creatively with something that touched on his Jewish identity. This was his role as the screenwriter for *Gentleman's Agreement*, the movie based on Laura Z. Hobson's book, in which

Gregory Peck plays a writer who assumes a Jewish identity in order to show the prevalence of anti-Semitism in America. The significant factor in the history of the making of the movie was that none of the Jewish studio heads wanted to make the movie. (As I attempted to show in the history chapter, for the most part Jewish elites felt that they did not want to remind the greater public of the existence of Jews.) The person who was brave enough to make the movie was Darryl F. Zanuck, the only non-Jew among the major studio-heads, who believed that the subject would be a hit among Americans who might have felt bad about the Holocaust and who wanted an exploration of American xenophobia. Bach writes, "When Jack Warner formally assembled the Jewish patriarchs of the industry to dissuade Zanuck from making the picture, Zanuck sent an articulate stand-in to the meeting: Moss" (277). Zanuck made sure to not evince an anti-Semitic response to the movie by assigning most roles to non-Jews, and getting a Greek, Elia Kazan to direct it. But since the screenplay was based on Hobson's novel, almost nothing having to do with Jewish identity had come from Moss. Nevertheless, Bach writes that Hart was never ambivalent about his ethnicity, he notes, "'I am a racial Jew,' he liked to say, and friends took care to avoid any reminders of anti-Semitism around him" (277). Kaufman on the other hand upon hearing that Hart was turning the novel into a film responded, "I don't have to pay three fifty to find out what it feels like to be a Jew" (127). While neither flaunted their Jewish identity they also did not make it less evident or hide it.

In fact, Kaufman was well acquainted with anti-Semitism from his own work experience. It seems possible that his aversion to using ethnic material in his texts was as a result of a long process of acceptance that in the media, publishing and other industries one had to hide or at least not flaunt ones' Jewish identity. One of his first jobs in the media industry was writing a column for the Washington *Times* a job he had been

recommended for by Franklin P. Adams, one of the greatest journalists of the time, the publisher was Frank A. Munsey,

> Munsey, in addition to being the proprietor of a great many newspapers and magazines, was also a virulent and unashamed anti-Semite…As for Adams, Munsey either didn't know he was Jewish, or knew it but was interested…As for himself, Kaufman decided in his self-deprecatory way, Adams had suggested him less for his abilities than for the mischievous fun of seeing Munsey's face when he proposed someone with a clearly Jewish name. (Meredith 35)

Kaufman was peremptorily let go when he knocked the owner off his feet, upon rising Munsey asked "What is that Jew doing in my cityroom?" ("The Hitmaker") Kaufman lost his job almost immediately after this episode. From there Kaufman went on to write for the *New York Times*, Feingold explains that while there were a few city dailies which were owned by Jewish owners, most newspaper chains were not and Jewish writers had trouble being hired by them.

> Before 1920 some major newspapers such as the Washington Post and the New York times were owned by Jews, and there was also Jewish representation among reporters, editors, columnists, and feature writers. That representation had a precedent, during the German-Jewish period, in the careers of Mordecai Noah, the renowned editor of the *National Advocate*; Joseph Pulitzer, who as publisher of the *New York World* introduced many of the techniques of modern journalism; Adolf S. Ochs, who became the principal owner of the *New York Times* in 1896; and the several other Jews who had made names for themselves in journalism. (71)

But as Memmi writes Jews always found it in their best interest to keep the matter of Jewish identity under wraps and not to flaunt it, therefore even the mainstream newspapers run by Jewish media tycoons did not make the treatment of Jewish subject matter a priority,

> Jewish journalists would probably have lost their readers had they attempted to advocate a sectarian point of view. Moreover, Jewish publishers and journalists were aware of their delicate position, and some, like Arthur Hays Sulzberger, took great pains to avoid even the appearance of being tainted by Jewishness. *The New York Times* underplayed all news of Jewish interest, including the Russian

> pogroms of the twenties. The most influential of the Jewish journalists, Walter Lippmann, harbored an intense distaste for his nouveaux riches Jewish brethren, and he had almost nothing to say about the slaughter during the Holocaust. What is puzzling is not the sensitivity of Jewish newspaper publishers and journalists to their exposed position, but that so many displayed an unerring instinct for the popular mind-set. (Feingold 71)

Yet, Dinnerstein writes that Lippmann had a very tough time as a student at Harvard where very few Gentiles socialized with him, which might have accounted for his snobbery of fellow Jews when he finally "made it" (86).

Chapter III: The Great Collaborators

> No epicenter of American Jewish culture exists. There is no capital that is akin, say, to the vicinity of St.-Germain-des-Prés where post-war French culture could be situated. But if there were such a locale, it would be Broadway. (Whitfield 59)

This section examines four of the plays that Kaufman and Hart wrote together. Critics exploring the elements of dramaturgy from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s that might contribute to the study of American-Jewish theater consistently write that Kaufman and Hart silenced the subject of ethnicity, whether from condescension towards Eastern European Jewry who they did not consider themselves a part of, or because of the negative political atmosphere towards Jews. Julius Novick writes

> [. . .] until well after World War II, Jewish American playwrights seldom concerned themselves exclusively, or primarily, or even occasionally, with Jewish protagonists and Jewish themes. Instead like the Jewish studio heads who ruled Hollywood, like the Jewish creators of Archie and Superman comics, they conjured up worlds where everybody is ethnically neutral, with an Anglo-Saxon name, except perhaps for some secondary comic types capering in the background. Jewish playwrights as eminent and prolific as George S. Kaufman, Moss Hart, and Lillian Hellman seldom or never created a central character who was explicitly or even recognizably Jewish. (1)

Novick notes that because Kaufman and Hart were not descendants of Eastern European Jewry they,

> were not always eager to identify themselves with the toiling masses of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Thus the anti-Semitic tinge to a stage direction from *Merton of the Movies* (1922), by Kaufman and Marc Connelly, in which one character is described as "a Semitic-appearing young man, rather crude". (1)

Yet, Novick overstates the case, in the least, if not being wrong entirely. Kaufman and Hart never denied being Jewish and their identity never remained hidden. In fact, Hart grew up in a poor section of the Bronx and later lived in the Brighton Beach neighborhood of Brooklyn among those same Eastern European Jews whom, Novick says, that he tried to avoid. In fact, Novick's critical work on Jewish American drama

begins with a quick look at Kaufman and Hart and identifies them as writers who opted out of writing Jewish content in their works, yet Novick's work *Beyond the Golden Door: Jewish American Drama and Jewish American Experience*, presupposes that authors who leave out their identity should not be included in a work on American-Jewish experience. In a similar vein as where I have argued against critical claims that Lispector and Ginzburg do not deserve recognition as Jewish writers, and writing against Novick specifically, I claim that even if these two Jewish American playwrights' experience of the American identity involved not making Judaism overt in their works, a dismissal of their treatment of Jewish identity falls short of a complete critical treatment. Furthermore, a case can be made that Kaufman and Hart are not an exception to the experience of American-Jewish writers, rather, they represent the rule.

Also, Novick's line of thinking leaves out a whole host of subjects that Kaufman and Hart cover in their works which directly relate to their Jewish identity. Using definitions of Jewish identity from Memmi's *Portrait of a Jew*, I show how Kaufman and Hart continuously explored identity in their plays while appearing as if they had completely abandoned the themes and subjects important to the Jewish community.

The plays this chapter is concerned with are *Once in a Lifetime*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *The American Way*. The plays are similar in that they are all about real or adopted families. Memmi writes, "I shall confine myself to noting a fact which I consider obvious: like religion, the Jewish family is an undeniable factor in the life of the Jew, a factor of an organization and a solidity seldom found elsewhere" (306). While *Once in a Lifetime* and *Merrily We Roll Along* are both mainly concerned with a trio of friends who act like family members toward each other and who in fact are as close to each other as a biological family, *You Can't Take It with You* and *The American Way* are about tight-knit families units whose success and failure depends

on their cohesiveness. This chapter also explores such themes, important to Jewish identity in America, as the role of Jewish producers and studio heads in Hollywood, the role of the political left in the Jewish community, and the projection of the authors' identity onto other minor ethnic characters. This chapter is arranged chronologically, dealing with the plays in the order in which Kaufman and Hart wrote them.

MINOR JEWISH CHARACTERS IN THE KAUFMAN AND HART PLAYS

Once in a Lifetime, the first play on which Kaufman and Hart collaborated, is the story of the upheaval in Hollywood when the talkies supplanted silent films. A group of three washed up vaudevillians (May, Jerry and George) decide to move out to Hollywood from New York to start an elocution school and train all the actors who previously did not have to use their voices. The play delves into the subject of ethnicity only in that it does not de-Judaize the ethnicity of the studio heads that populate Hollywood, but these figures are drawn as caricatures, little more than marionettes, far from fully fleshed out. In this way, Kaufman and Hart hew closely to the standard shedding of Jewish identity by only allowing the Jews to appear as caricatures. It is important to show their use of this distancing strategy, though it is not a full or complete reading of their writing's approach to Jewish identity and themes. The first such appearance by a Hollywood studio head occurs when George is reading Variety on their train west, "The legitimate stage had better look to its laurels….Here is a medium that combines the wide scope of the motion picture with the finer qualities of the stage proper. It's an interview with Mr. Katzenstein" (Kaufman and Hart 21). Feingold writes that three of the eight major Hollywood studios were Jewish-owned in 1936 and that anti-Semitic fervor in the 1930s claimed that Jewish values were going to swamp the rest of the country (131). Yet, when the play was being

written in 1930, Kaufman and Hart had no trouble exploring the majority Jewish ownership of Hollywood studios; as long as their protagonists were not Jewish the subject was not off limits. Therefore, such off hand remarks by characters as the one by Jerry, the protagonist, whose idea it is to go to Hollywood, "The movies are back where they were when the De Milles and the Laskys first saw what they were going to amount to!" (Kaufman and Hart 14)

Vaudeville in New York in the 1920s and before was dominated by Jewish vaudevillians who often caricatured and presented satiric portraits of members of their own identity. *Once in a Lifetime* continues that vaudevillian trend by caricaturing Jewish studio heads not because of the writers' self-hatred for member of their own ethnicity, but because such lampooning had not come out of style yet in the early 1930s. From the beginning of the play the authors establish that Hollywood is a fake dream, a bubble and a façade where people do not have to be as naturally talented as in the theater. With the quote about Katzenstein the authors establish that they will ridicule the idea of Hollywood as the proper stage, when in fact it is an unreal space, where no one understands what is happening or why, how to produce a proper film or whom to hire, how to choose a story line or write one. In this Hollywood, real playwrights are summoned to Hollywood only to have their time wasted and their creative vision destroyed (this is the case of writer Lawrence Vail who upon coming to Hollywood can never meet with the studio head Glogauer, although Glogauer keeps paying his salary). Secretaries do not do their jobs or deliver messages to the appropriate people. Doctors are not doctors. Movie scripts are not produced because they are good but because the supervisor cannot tell the difference between the wastebasket and the place where the new scenarios are kept. In short, while *Once in a Lifetime* is a comedy, it is also almost a dystopian fantasy (the likes of which were written by Ionescu and Havel), a sharp and

biting look at a dysfunctional industry where nothing quite works and where irrational new laws have been imposed on the employees.

The play could have had more references to Hart's Jewish background, but they were cut by Kaufman. The original play first written by Hart and then shown to Kaufman –who agreed to make it ready for the stage – had as characters Hollywood songwriters, and Hart had used the last name Solomon (his English family's last name) for one of them (Bach 57). The same happened with the Schlepkin brothers, and the character of the studio head Herman Glogauer was added to mask the too Jewish "Mr. Dahlberg" (the original name Hart used for Glogauer) who was modeled on real life producer Irving Thalberg, who worked first at Universal Studios and then at MGM (Bach 58). Kaufman and Hart lampoon the silly Jewish producers who play small roles in the play, but they do this in a tradition of Broadway playwrights in numerous other plays and movies for Jewish theater producers,

> Indeed, it became a common comic device in various forms of entertainment to have a pair of crass, uncultured Jewish theatrical producers. From the caustic, wise-cracking Kibbitzer and Eppus in J.P. McEvoy's satiric 1928 novel *Show Girl* to vaudeville pros Smith and Dale in the 1932 film *Manhattan Parade* . . . (Merwin 68)

The producers that Kaufman and Hart were satirizing were based on real life figures like Harry Cohn, Louis B. Mayer, the Warner brothers, Budd Schulberg, the Schenck brothers, Marcus Loew, and Thalberg.

Glogauer (the stand-in for Thalberg) appears several times throughout the play, "Herman Glogauer, one of the biggest motion-picture producers in the country" explains George, one of the vaudevillians whose naiveté and absent-mindedness result in great success for Glogauer's studio (Kaufman and Hart 37). Thalberg was known as Hollywood's most famous producer because he had a knack for making successful

pictures, however, in Kaufman and Hart's comedy the character Glogauer does not make successful pictures because he is in any way gifted, rather, his is luck at choosing the people who are least qualified to direct like George, and giving them the reins. During the course of the play George can do no wrong even though he is completely untalented, and all of his mistakes turn into industry gold because somehow they win the public over. It is evident from analyzing the play that even when Kaufman and Hart based their characters on real-life Jewish figures, the achievements of these Jewish figures were caricatured and down-graded. Whenever Glogauer appears in the play he does not provide a picture of an intelligent, thinking producer who made a number of hits through his talent, rather, he appears to be an overworked busybody and the authors make a point of highlighting his inactivity and inability to keep in charge of the business in any way other than delegating his own responsibilities to other people. He is constantly murmuring things such as "I can't see anyone now! Close the doors! Let's have a little peace here!" (41). In the stage directions the authors provide a description of Glogauer, "Herman Glogauer, who now stands brushing himself off, emerges as a nervous wreck of a man who probably has a bad stomach. You can't go through that kind of thing every day without it's having some effect" (41-42). In fact, the real life Glogauer, Irving Thalberg was known as one of the most talented people in the business, a wunderkind of a sort, who inspired F. Scott Fitzgerald to model the protagonist (Monroe Stahr) of his last novel *The Last Tycoon* (1941) on him. Like Kaufman and Hart mention in their stage directions about Glogauer's "bad stomach", Thalberg was very sick and died at the young age of 37.

The Schlepkin Brothers are the other studio heads that Kaufman and Hart parody, characterized as twelve brothers who fly in and out of Hollywood from Brooklyn where they all live with their mother (a most stereotypical picture of a Jewish family: a Jewish mother and her doting sons). This portrait is probably a caricature and conflation of the

Warner Brothers and the Schenck Brothers: there were four Warner brothers and they all participated in first owning a theater and then a film production company, and there were seven Schenck Brothers, two of whom became partners with Marcus Loew one of the owners of MGM,

> You know that tremendous spectacle the Schlepkin Brothers are putting on—*The Old Testament*. Well Mr. Schlepkin—I mean the oldest of the twelve brothers—the real brains of the business—he used to have the cloak-room privilege in all the West Coast theatres—he just told me that they've stopped work on the picture and they're scrapping the whole thing. They're not going to make anything but talkies from now on! (40)

The reference to the silent film *The Old Testament* is a crack at studio heads who wanted to capitalize on the success of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*. Kaufman and Hart allude to the Schlepkin's (or Warner's) previous theater dealings, and to the fact that Warner Brothers was the first film studio to use Vitaphone. Glogauer says, "The Schlepkin Brothers. What did they have to go and make pictures talk for? Things were going along fine. You couldn't stop making money—even if you turned out a good picture you made money" (43). Warner Brothers was the first studio to transition from silent films to talkies, and release the first film with sound, Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* (the film from 1927 had first been a smash play on Broadway in 1925).

Glogauer bemoans the Schlepkin Brothers prescience in using Vitaphone, and includes details about them which are modeled on the history of the Warner Brothers film studio which was going bankrupt before it made *The Jazz Singer*, making it one of the richest studios in the country,

> Four times already they were on their last legs and every time they got new ones. Everything comes to those Schlepkin Brothers! This fellow Lou Jackson—sings these mammies or whatever it is—he comes all the way across the country and goes right to the Schlepkin Brothers. (43)

> Schlepkin Brothers! I know what they want! They're sitting on top of the world now—with their Lou Jackson—so they try to gobble up everybody! All my life they been trying to get me! Way back in the fur business already, when I had nickelodeons and they only had pennylodeons. Always wanting to merge, merge! And because there's twelve of them they want odds yet! (44)

The reference to Lou Jackson is of course a reference to Al Jolson, the Jewish vaudeville actor who was famous for his blackface impersonations and his role as a cantor's son (in the movie *The Jazz Singer*) who becomes a famous jazz singer in blackface (therefore the reference to "mammies"). The movie was inspired by the hit Broadway play of the same name, and the play in turn was inspired by a short story that Samson Raphaelson wrote about Al Jolson after he had seen him perform in blackface. Jolson's prominent place among the leading figures of the Jewish New York theatre scene was discussed in the previous chapter. The construction of the phrases that punctuate Glogauer's thoughts point out that he also speaks Yiddish. The phrase "they want odds yet" ends with a conclusion 'yet' that is typical for Yiddish speakers. While Kaufman and Hart are satirizing the famous Jewish studio heads they are at the same time providing readers with the historical trajectory of these pioneering figures as they went from owning little theaters in northeastern towns to large theater complexes, and finally to creating the largest film studios in the country.

It is also worth considering the subtlety with which Kaufman and Hart may be mining the typical caricature-churn in the creation of minor Jewish characters, while also towing the stereotypical line. Note that *Once in a Lifetime* takes as its central theme the displacement of the silent film with talkies. There is an irony in Jewish identity being silenced, or in the least reduced to caricature, as some of the leading figures of the Jewish theatre scene, such as Al Jolson, are transplanted to Hollywood, and on another level, the fact that Jolson himself mined caricature to great success. There is also an ironic tinge in the allusion to *The Ten Commandments* and the proposed making of *Old Testament* that

can be read as Kaufman and Hart once again raising the issue of Jewish identity with a subtle touch even within a caricature of it. Finally, and at a more systemic level, the artificiality of Hollywood is a key theme in this play, and it can be argued that the caricature to which the Jewish studio heads are reduced is not simply caricature, but Kaufman and Hart playing with the argument that if Hollywood is a fake, it is not simply the case that the studio heads are lucky bunglers; in fact, a treatment of Hollywood requires them to commit the most obvious act of fakery in creating their studio heads: making them out to be much less than they were in reality.

THE THEME OF FAMILY

For the New York City Jews who lived through the Great Depression their families were the single fixed constant in their lives. Therefore it is worth noting that many Kaufman and Hart plays explore the family dynamic extensively. For the authors of these plays a vigorous family unit contributed to maintaining a healthy society, which subsequently led to the success and happiness of the individual members of the family. On a larger level, the authors' fascination with the family unit in these plays does not only highlight the fact that as New York City Jews they survived the Great Depression, but that their status primarily as Jews always led them to give greater priority to 'family' than to any other aspect of their lives. For Memmi, the family is the greatest constant in Jewish life, he writes,

> The Jewish family, a defensive institution for the Jew against the world, shields him, from his childhood on, from the reality of that world…On the other hand, he is inevitably hurt by the world because he is not prepared for the struggle; and because, in every way, the struggle is too harsh and too unfair to him, the Jew turns back to the family, re-enforces it and supports it with ever new contributions. (309-10)

Memmi defines the family unit as an intrinsic part of Jewish life, and because family is so important to Jews, Kaufman and Hart chose the one theme – for a majority of their plays—that they both had in common. If Hollywood is an artificial world in which the Jew is either silenced or caricatured, the family is the "real" world of the Jew, a cloister harboring Jewish identity and set against Memmi's merciless real world.

Merrily We Roll Along is a play in which Kaufman and Hart write about the meaning of family. Richard Niles, Julia Glenn, and Jonathan Crale are a family, a trio of friends who support each other. Yet, it is Niles' rejection of the family that signals his undoing. The writers are saying that the rejection of the family unit brings about the rejection of the basic values that are inherent to friendship and society. Yet, I will make the claim that this family unit in the works of Kaufman and Hart is also emblematic of Jewish identity. Memmi writes, "Rejected by non-Jewish society (or by the colonizers), the Jew like the colonized can take refuge only in his family" (308). It is the fact that Niles is not moored to family and to friends (another form of family in the plays of Kaufman and Hart) that forces him to sell out, to become a writer who chooses to write for money and success. He rejects the serious works which he had planned and staged when he worked as part of a collective, and instead focuses on light comedies which make a lot of money but do not mean anything.

The unwinding of family ties is one of the larger themes in this work. At first Niles's greatest relationship is with his best friend Jonathan Crale, a relationship shown in the last scene of the play (the play is told in reverse chronological order, so the last scene is chronologically the first), where Niles makes his valedictorian speech in college to friendship—specifically it is about Crale,

> I have waited until the last hour to talk about you—you as I know you, not in the classroom or on the field…Those were the hours when we discovered and

> embraced that greatest of all glories friendship. Of all the things I take away with me, the one that I most treasure, for which I am the most humbly grateful, is a friendship that I have formed here. (He makes a slight gesture toward Jonathan Crale) I hope he will always be beside me, all through my life. Many are the things that vanish in this changing world, but a real friendship will always endure. If I could make one wish for you—for all of you—I would ask that you be given a great friendship. (Kaufman and Hart 227)

Niles makes a sentimental and idealistic speech that speaks to the play's ideals of maintaining a close family/friendship circle. Crale is Niles' best friend and as long as they are working and living together Niles is able to produce great art: plays that are meaningful, moving and that speak to the current events or politics of the day. As soon as Niles abandons his old friends and chooses a new group of shallow actresses and millionaires who are more interested in popular art that sells because it is funny and easy to understand, he betrays his spiritual side and the play traces his eventual dissolution and the dissolution of all the characters.

In the previous act we see that Niles's other great relationship is with his girlfriend Helen, yet later we see the dissolution of the relationship as Helen stops supporting Niles's work because it does not contribute to the life that she wants to lead. In effect she and her family are the ones who at first push Niles to sell out, to make his art about money. If on one level the authors are saying that sexual relationships eventually force artists to make choices that invalidate their art, platonic relationships like the relationship between Niles, Crale and Julia can only serve to better humanity – as they are less likely to force the artist to compromise his art – this is not the only point that Kaufman and Hart are making. We see this plot playing out throughout the play, as the character Althea Royce destroys her husband who in the end commits suicide, while also seducing Niles. Niles divorces Helen, marries Althea, and subsequently destroys her. Of course, the sexual relationships that Niles enters into destroy his art, as he becomes a popular hack, not the author of serious plays that his friends expected from him, and the

sexual relationships or the non-platonic families that Niles enters into also destroy his platonic family. Niles stops speaking to Crale, who has drawn a painting of him embracing a cash register; and Julia whose love for Niles remained unrequited has succumbed to drink.

Throughout *Merrily We Roll Along* the authors reinforce the idea that loyalty to the family unit that defined Nile's, Crale's and Julia's relationship, would have allowed the members of the unit to achieve spiritual happiness and would have made their life valuable and enriched their art. The sexual relationship and seduction may be the method through which Kaufman and Hart provoke a dismantling of the family unit, but ultimately, it is the same family unit that Memmi identifies as critical to Jewish identity.

Underscoring the importance of the family/friend trio at the center of the play *Merrily We Roll Along* is the fact that Hart mined some of the elements of his own family environment. Bach writes,

> It is uncertain what emotional autobiography might be present in *Merrily We Roll Along,* but many details came from life. Moss brought back the Levensons from the Bronx, the family whose father had given him the part-time job in the music store. There was a ukulele, and a cold-water flat like the ones Moss had grown up in. (126)

Of course, while in *Merrily We Roll Along* the destruction of the familycircle causes the moral and physical destruction of all of the characters, in Kaufman and Hart's other plays, like *Once in a Lifetime*, *You Can't Take It with You* and *The American Way*, the family circle preserves the lives of the individual members and enriches their lives. Also, as the character of Niles makes all of the wrong choices in the pursuit of success and destroys his family fiber in the process, the protagonists of *Once in a Lifetime,* manufacture and maintain their success in the topsy-turvy world of Hollywood specifically because their family unit—friendship remains unbroken; although success

and wealth threaten it, the characters make sure to find their spiritual core and reunite. Whether seduced by a woman, or seduced by the celluloid image, the Jew is constantly being dismantled and put back together again in the work of Kaufman and Hart.

You Can't Take It with You is probably the most famous Kaufman and Hart play and the one which won them a Pulitzer for best play. And, of course, it is primarily concerned with the concept of the family. The play presents two completely disparate families, the happy and haphazard Vanderhof family, and the staid and perfectly composed Kirby family. Alice Vanderhof has fallen in love with Tony Kirby, as a result of working at his father's company, Kirby & Co. where he is a vice president. The authors have worked really hard to present a completely American family in the Kirbys, whose portrayal is as stereotypically WASP as the studio heads were stereotypically Jewish. On the other side, though, the play abolishes Jewish ethnicity in favor of eccentricity with the Vanderhof clan. The reason for this is that in a play about a mismatched couple Kaufman and Hart were following in the footsteps of another play about an ethnically mismatched family which was one of the longest running plays on Broadway in the 1920s, Anne Nichols' *Abie's Irish Rose*.

In *Act One* Hart writes that *Abie's Irish Rose* played an extremely important role in his own life (43). The play tells the story of two incompatible families, one Irish and one Jewish, and the Jewish son Abie falls in love with the Irish Rose and there ensues a plot to define the melting pot that is New York. "Still, how strange a quirk of fate it is that as Anne Nichols wrote the opening lines of *Abie's Irish Rose* she was also changing unalterably the life of an obscure office boy named Moss Hart" (Hart 55). Of course what Moss meant was that because Anne Nichols was so busy with *Abie's Irish Rose* she did not have the time to write a new play for Augustus Pitou for whom Hart worked at the time as an office boy. Pitou was looking for a new play and since there was a dearth of

plays at the time or so Hart claimed, Hart was able to write a play from scratch and pass it off to Pitou as one that had been written by a legitimate playwright.

That was not the only reason that *Abie's Irish Rose* was important to Hart: even though Kaufman and Hart's premise is remarkably similar to Nichols' play, the removal of the role of ethnicity in the play speaks to the shifting landscape in the U.S. as discussed in the previous chapter. While Nicholls' play revolves around the problematic of two disparate ethnicities and intermarriage between them, by the time Kaufman and Hart use a similar premise ten years had passed between the 1920s and the 1930s, years in which the pro-melting pot aesthetic became reoriented towards as little differentiation from the majoritarian culture as possible and the public was no longer as responsive towards accentuation of multiculturalism as it had been in the 1920s. For example, Cohen surmises that Elmer Rice stayed away from ethnic drama later in his career because assimilated Jews resented attempts by people of their own ethnicity to put their problems on display, "Had Elmer Rice, born Elmer Leopold Reizenstein, written plays about Jews significantly more subtle than the more obvious acculturation plays of an Anne Nichols, he would have been deemed illegitimate on the legitimate stage" (Cohen 5). This is similar to the fear exhibited by the Jewish elites at the possibility of Jewish prominence in politics (already discussed in the previous chapter).

Even though Nichols' play would ultimately be a huge success, Kaufman and Hart must have been aware that Nichols struggled to get the play staged; in fact, the plot of the play, the story of intermarriage was problematic for Broadway producers at the time, and Nichols had to mortgage her house in order to produce the play (Lane 45). Merwin writes on the other hand that mobster Arnold Rothstein and Jewish producers helped pay for the Broadway production of *Abie's Irish Rose*, "Jerry Eisenhour has discovered that the managers of *Abie's Irish Rose* kept the show going only by

transferring large blocks of tickets to a Jewish cigar store owner named Joseph Leblang who resold them to the public at a discount" (69). This is a different version of the story from Lane's, who claims that Nichols paid for it herself because no one would touch it.

By the time that Kaufman and Hart got around to writing a story with a premise that revolved around marriage of characters from disparate families the plot of intermarriage had been used in *Kosher Kitty Kelly* (1925) and *The Cohens and the Kellys* (1926). There are a number of reasons why the authors chose not to make the play about intermarriage, but chief among them seems to be that while the subject was fine for the 1920s, the nativism and anti-Semitism of the late 1920s and 1930s, as well as the assimilationist tendencies of the majority of American Jews at the time made the subject of Jewish ethnicity simply unpalatable for writers and other purveyors of culture who stayed away from the topic in the 1930s. Cohen writes,

> But such an uncamouflaged portrait of the Jew could not be the focal point in the beginnings of Jewish-American drama, in, for example the 1920s melting pot plays of Elmer Rice. Just as the more established German-Jewish community tried to suppress the early Yiddish theater for making 'spectacles of themselves before all of New York,' so the newly assimilated Eastern European Jews of the 1920s did not want Jewish-American dramatists to depict them as significantly different from their fellow Americans…Moreover, Broadway producers, knowing that drama evoking prejudice or battling it would be bad for business, backed only those plays that would not offend any sizable group. (5)

In fact, moving away from ethnic characterizations was typical for almost all Jewish playwrights in the 1930s through the 1950s. It is no surprise then that Kaufman and Hart who did theater work for Jewish community centers early on in their careers moved away from the subject as their mainstream American identity supplanted their Jewish identity and as they began to feel that in the political atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s addressing a homogenized America was easier than showcasing an unpopular ethnic group in their works. Similarly a number of critics have addressed this absence in Arthur

Miller. Cohen writes that although his first plays in the 1930s *Honors at Dawn* and *No Villain* were about Jews,

> Miller, however, did not continue in this vein, for in his 1940s bid for Broadway, he, like Elmer Rice in the 1920s, sensed that that climate was unfavorable for homegrown ethnic drama. Moreover, he himself did not want to be known as a producer of parochial stock, but aspired to be a great public playwright able to capture the essence of the generic American, the universal tragedy of the common man. (Cohen 7)

Miller moved away from the topic as he set his ambitions on having plays staged on Broadway and Jewish themed plays rarely made it to Broadway.

Yet, even if Kaufman and Hart stayed away from obviously ethnic drama, the mayhem that is present in the family—the Vanderhof home is inhabited by an odd variety of characters, an agglomeration of relatives and hangers on—speaks peculiarly of the Jewish condition. Grandpa Vanderhof is at the helm of the family, Penelope Sycamore is his daughter, she in turn has two daughters Essie and Alice, and then there is the African-American cook and housekeeper Rheba and her boyfriend Donald, and finally Mr. De Pinna, who works with Paul Sycamore (Penelope's husband) and lives in the basement where they manufacture firecrackers. In fact, Hart's family, with the parents and the grandparents, the strange aunt, all of whom lived together, plus the many boarders that they took on, was remarkably similar to the Vanderhof family, and could not be more different from the Kirbys, the staid and obviously Anglo-American family of the play. Woody Allen writes that his obsession with the theater came from reading Kaufman and Hart plays; the play that first caught his attention was *You Can't Take It with You* because the title phrase was so familiar to him that as an eight year old finding the book at his local library he could not help but read it, "The title drew my attention simply because that was a phrase used by my father to defend the inevitable results of his numbers habit" ("Woody Allen"). It was not just the humor that so appealed to Allen, but the whole

universe that Kaufman and Hart characters inhabited he felt was reminiscent of his own experiences at home and with his family. He writes,

> My own household, while not populated by quite as colorful eccentrics as crammed the Vanderhof home, still sported a fairly combustible farrago of aunts, uncles, parents, grandparents, cousins, all hunkered down in the same flat, pooling ingenuity against the Depression. The play captured our bedlam deliriously. ("Woody Allen")

And while the play captured specifically the environment of the Allen family, it was also emblematic of the Jewish world of immigrants, sharing their space with family members and taking on ever increasing numbers of relatives. Bach writes,

> Carmel Bentwich Finkelstein, Moss's cousin, later insisted that the play about 'a slightly mad family,' as Kaufman described it, whose characters were each caught up in pursuit of some eccentric but harmless enthusiasm, was inspired by the tales Moss heard as a boy about the multitalented Solomons in England. (145-46)

Bach writes that the English brother of Hart's grandfather Barney, Joseph, owned a leather factory in London and lived in a townhouse designed by the architect of the Buckingham Palace, his children and grandchildren included a famous violinist who performed at Albert Hall, and a famous painter Solomon J. Solomon "the second Jewish member of the Royal Academy" (5).

From the minute that Alice introduces Tony Kirby to her family, it is obvious that she understands that her family's difference from the mainstream will be an impediment to a future relationship with Tony, she says,

> ALICE. Look, Tony, This is something I should have said a long time ago, but I didn't have the courage. . .
>
> [. . .] ALICE. No, wait, Tony. I want to make it clear to you. You're of a different world—a whole different kind of people. Oh, I don't mean money or socially—that's too silly. But your family and mine—it just wouldn't work, Tony. It just wouldn't work. (Kaufman and Hart 260)

This is the kind of conversation that audiences have heard hundreds of times, but typically the difference between the families is a matter of ethnicity or race or religion, it is a difference of identity. Yet, because identity becomes such a taboo subject in 1930s America, the only difference between the families that can be palatable to an American audience at the time is an ideological difference between the families, a lifestyle difference.

> TONY. But I didn't mind that. Besides, darling, we're not going to live with our families. It's just you and I.
>
> ALICE. No, it isn't—it's never quite that. I love them, Tony—I love them deeply. Some people could cut away, but I couldn't. I know they do rather strange things—I never know what to expect next—but they're gay, and they're fun, and—I don't know—there's a kind of nobility about them . . .
>
> [. . .] ALICE. But your family, Tony. I'd want you, and everything about you, everything about me, to be—one. I couldn't start out with a part of me that you didn't share, and part of you that I didn't share. Unless we were all one—you, and your mother and father—I'd be miserable. And they never can be, Tony—I know it. They couldn't be. (Kaufman and Hart 261-262)

It is precisely this definition of unity that Alice pinpoints in her family -- the sharing of the family, becoming one with your own family and the family of one's significant other—that again reminds one of what Memmi identifies as one of the chief marks of Jewish identity: because the Jewish condition is typically negative, the only positive aspect to which every Jewish person always turns back is the Jewish family. Similarly, Alice expects to be rejected by the Kirby's because of her imperfect family and therefore she warns Tony that their union cannot be, specifically because of the eccentricities of her family. The Vanderhofs' non-Jewish oddness places them outside of the mainstream or the majoritarian space that the Kirbys inhabit, and as such, their difference and strangeness immediately labels them as 'ethnic'. The play might not be about ethnicity, but it is about acceptance of the differences of others, a cultural pluralism that was

quickly been eroded in the nativist atmosphere of the 1930s. In a similar fashion to the subtle way in which Kaufman and Hart "avoid" Jewishness in other plays, through caricature in *Once in a Lifetime*, and through the theme of family in *Merrily We Roll Along*, by avoiding Jewishness in *You Can't Take It with You* the authors allow ethnicity to morph into eccentricity, indicting the hegemonic structure in the same way that a subversive ethno-centric work would have done it.

On a final note, *You Can't Take It with You* like *Once in a Lifetime* also harks back to Hart's experience with Jewish vaudeville. He had spent years watching vaudeville acts and perfecting them for his summer camp audiences in the Borsht Belt. The personalities presented in the play are nothing if not a combination of solo acts from a vaudeville show: there is ballet, fire crackers, a play being written on the stage and acrobatics, which in effect all represent the variety acts for which vaudeville theater of the early twentieth century was famous.

REORIENTING ETHNICITY

In addition to caricature, family and eccentricity, ethnicity can be reoriented – both literally and thematically – through name changing, which was a typical practice in the entertainment industries of the twentieth century, where producers and the public demanded de-ethnicized names, names that came as close to sounding 'white' as possible. In *Merrily We Roll Along*, Kaufman and Hart speak about the practice in reference to the actress Althea Royce, who had changed her previously Irish sounding name to a completely un-accented name,

> ALTHEA. Mother, will you please stop calling me Annie?
>
> MRS. RILEY. Well, for Christ's sake that's your name, ain't it? That's what you were born. Annie Riley to Althea Royce—that's a sleeper jump for you. And I see

> by the program—(She unfolds it)—where your grandfather was the founder of the Irish Theatre. Old Patrick Royce. The only place he was ever found was under the seat drunk. (She consults the program) "Comes from a long line of distinguished Irish actors." You should know some of them. Your great-grandfather was a horse-thief; old Patrick Royce was sent up for wife-beating, when he wasn't busy found the Irish Theatre, and— (193)

Althea's name change does not only signify her search for a completely white identity (the play takes place at a time when the Irish like Jews had not fully cemented their place in white America), but it underscores the inauthenticity of Althea's character. Althea is a negatively portrayed character. She is a ruthless actress whose every action serves to further her career: while married to a vaudeville actor with whom she began her career on the vaudeville circuit she is known for sleeping around and sleeping with playwrights who can write the best parts for her. She is later responsible for her husband's suicide, and for corrupting Richard Niles, who gives up on writing plays that matter and turns to writing insignificant yet financially viable fluff, as discussed in the earlier section on family identity as Jewish identity.

Yet, while the authors expound on Althea's name change as a symbol of the lengths that rapacious, social-climbers go to in order to change their identity, there is also another character whose name in the play was also changed, the Jewish businessman who appears in the first scene of the play as Cyrus Winthrop. When Cyrus Winthrop is introduced in the last act (which is chronologically earlier than any of the other scenes as the play because of its reverse chronological order) the stage directions explain his identity,

> Simon Weintraub comes in. If the Murneys but knew it, they are at this moment in the presence of a future millionaire, a man who is destined to change the entire surface of industrial America. For Simon Weintraub is none other than that future art connoisseur and cellopaper king, Cyrus Winthrop. (Kaufman and Hart 210)

While Kaufman and Hart do not delve into Weintraub's/Winthrop's name change, possibly because they are not comfortable discussing the phenomenon of Jews changing their names, they feel quite comfortable discussing the phenomenon when it comes to other ethnicities, in this case the Irish Annie/Althea. In fact, Jewish writers had already written about this name-changing phenomenon in the entertainment industry. In *The Jazz Singer*, the 1925 play and 1927 movie, the protagonist Jakie Rabinowitz changes his name to Jack Robin, "'Last time you forgot and addressed me Jakie Rabinowitz,' the vaudeville performer writes his mother. 'Jack Robin is my name now'" (Rogin 92). So in fact highlighting the assimilationist tendencies of entertainers was not a new theme of the 1930s, yet it seems that in the 1930s the nativism present in the news and the atmosphere prevented Kaufman and Hart from freely discussing this tendency as something of a trend in Jewish circles, and forced them to project what effectively was a phenomenon if not wholly limited to Jews, at least most prevalent in Jewish circles, onto other 'whiter' ethnicities like the Irish. Rogin notes "80 percent of the fifty thousand Americans who filed name change petitions in the 1940s were Jews" (210). Yet, Kaufman and Hart did not feel comfortable speaking about the practice as it applied to Jews.

For many Jews who had to live through the increasingly nativist and anti-Semitic fervor of the 1930s and 1940s changing their Jewish names was the only way to escape snubs, insults and demeaning situations. Dinnerstein suggests that Sulzberger and Adolph Ochs, the *New York Times* publishers, encouraged new writers with Jewish first names such as Abraham to abbreviate them. Furthermore, the practice was specifically popular with wealthier Jews, and those who were working in industries where their names would be on public display. Dinnerstein quotes a Hollywood writer/director, Abraham Polansky, who was encouraged to change his name at Paramount studios, "I didn't change my name and nothing happened. But many actors did. Americans wanted to see Americans" (qtd.

in Dinnerstein 125). It is particularly the last part of that quote which explains why many Jews felt that their Jewish identity would place into question their increasingly new loyalty to America, which did not accept Jews as full Americans. As Hollywood imagined one uniform American identity, in the 1930s and 1940s it did away with ethnicities which threatened the mythical landscape of a homogenous nation which the studios wanted to create in the minds of their consumers. It is an irony that brings full circle the caricatured studio heads of the artificial world portrayed – and historicized – by Kaufman and Hart in *Once in a Lifetime*, who created a mythical homogenous landscape made for mass consumption.

Authors like Kaufman and Hart found it easier to depict ethnicities farther from their own than to address subjects that were uncomfortable for their audiences, Griffel writes,

> we see that the more successful that Jewish composers and lyricists of Broadway shows became during the years of the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the McCarthy era the more they avoided writing Jewish-sounding music and creating Jewish characters and stories for the stage. They felt safer in portraying other ethnicities, minorities, and stereotypes, as they wished to become fully assimilated into American society. (15)

Ethnicities other than their own Jewish ethnicity pervade Kaufman and Hart's works. In *You Can't Take It with You*, the idealized family in the play is populated not just by the completely white Vanderhof family but also by the African American couple Rheba and her boyfriend, who are equal part members of the Vanderhof family and demonstrate the egalitarian characteristics that all the family members exhibit. From the first introduction of Donald and Rheba whose unorthodox relationship (they are not married) is left uncommented in the play, the audience senses that the couple are on equal standing with other members of the family, the only distancing is exhibited when Donald uses the

formal Mrs. Sycamore and Mr. Ed to address characters, while they in turn refer to him by his first name.

> ED. The boy friend, eh, Rheba?
>
> PENNY. (as Rheba disappears into the hallway). Donald and Rheba are awfully cute together. Sort of like Porgy and Bess. (RHEBA having opened the door, the gentleman named DONALD now looms up in the doorway—darkly. He is a colored man of no uncertain hue). (240)

This use of African-American characters who contribute to the family and make decisions as full-fledged family members shows the tendencies of leftist Jews of the 1920s and 1930s when Jewish participation in the NAACP and other African-American associations was at its height, as outlined in the first chapter on historical context to the American-Jewish experience. The reference to *Porgy and Bess*, the Gershwin opera from 1930, which was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera but then rejected because of the necessity for an African-American cast, corroborates the thesis proposed by David Levering Lewis and Hasia Diner that the Jewish elite used African American affairs to conduct their own from a distance[6]. This also confers with my hypothesis in the chapter on Clarice that projecting Jewish identity onto members of other oppressed ethnicities was easier than dealing with one's own ethnicity, in a hostile environment. The character Alice, in *You Can't Take It with You*, uses the presence of Donald (the boyfriend) late at night in the family home, as a pretext for why the Kirby's will want nothing to do with the Vaderhofs:

> (As if to prove her point, they are suddenly interrupted at this moment by the entrance of DONALD from the kitchen. It is a DONALD who has plainly not

[6] "David Levering Lewis has analyzed a second strand of assimilationism among the turn-of-the-century German Jewish elite. For this group, the desire to assimilate brought with it a reluctance to fight the growing anti-Semitism directly for fear of jeopardizing their place in society. Lewis and Hasia Diner both argue that the resultant tension was in part resolved by supporting African American struggles, in which German Jews sought to fight anti-Semitism 'by proxy' in Diner's words; by 'remote control' in Lewis's" (Brodkin 157).

> expected to encounter midnight visitors, for he is simply dressed in a long white nightgown and a somewhat shorter bathrobe—a costume that permits a generous expanse of white nightshirt down around the legs, and, below that a couple of very black shins…)
>
> [. . .]ALICE. Now! Now do you see what I mean? Could you explain Donald to your father? (262-263)

Alice sees the family's liberality in allowing Rheba's boyfriend to share the family home and wander around the house as a part time owner (typically guests do not walk around their host's houses half naked) as a barrier to her acceptance into the staid and normative Kirby family, who represent the status quo, whereas her family breaks with all norms and traditions by embracing cultural pluralism. The use of the African-American characters in the play highlights Kaufman and Hart's own participation in the Jewish elite's acceptance and flirtation with cultural pluralism and civil rights. Lewis writes "By establishing a presence at the center of the civil rights movement with intelligence, money, and influence, elite Jews and their delegates could fight against anti-Semitism by remote control" (25). There is an obvious parallel between this historical development, as well as its use by Kaufman and Hart, and the acts of literary passing employed by Clarice, most notably in her two novels discussed in the next two chapters, as well as her real-life writing and action in the area of social justice.

In their next play, *The American Way*, produced in 1939, the playwrights retreated into blatant Americana, albeit with an immigrant past. The play chronicles the rise and fall of the American Dream, with the arrival of a German family, the Gunthers on Ellis Island in 1896, and shows the story of their 'making it' in America. The family moves to a small town in Ohio called Mapleton, where with the help of the local banker, the father develops his furniture store into a factory. He becomes financially successful—he is a tolerant and grateful capitalist who gives back to his workers by paying them a generous overtime; Kaufman and Hart infuse their vision of capitalism with a touch of socialism,

as Gunther willingly pays his workers a generous overtime wage, this again points out the Jewish political ideals in the 1920s and 1930s where a majority belonged to leftist political parties (as pointed out in the previous chapter).

Yet, when examining this play the question of what would send two Jewish writers in 1938 to write a play about German immigrants, when it was widely known what Germans were already starting to do to their Jewish population, looms. Bach writes that in 1938 "As Jews, Moss and Kaufman were painfully aware of anti-Semitism and fascism in Germany, which would erupt in the violence of the infamous Kristallnacht in November" (180). Yet, still they chose as their subject their protagonists a German immigrant family.

Throughout the play, the authors define and recalibrate the meaning of American identity. When his wife arrives on Ellis Island to join him Gunther immediately tells her that she must start speaking English, "Yes, yes, you must. You are going to be an American now" (Kaufman and Hart 329). Whitfield writes that Jews writing for the theater and performing in the first half of the twentieth century,

> felt that they could not address the mass audience as themselves, drawing upon their own culture and heritage, fathoming the depths of their own religion and history. But they could assume a mask that allowed the deepest emotions to be expressed, to convey their joy and their sorrow, their schmaltz and their pain, a spirit that soared and plunged outside the range of Anglo-Saxon gentility. In the evolution of American mass culture, the most representative and talented Jews made little conscious effort to resolve the antinomies of Jewish identity, or to promote a separate identity for their people. Instead they sought to address a mass audience, to dissolve into general Americana (American Space 46).

In fact, evaporating in the vastness of America, fading into the homogeneity of America is one of the themes in this play. In the stage directions during the Ellis Island scene we see that there are immigrants from all over, later the stage directions note "The polyglot crowd disappears into America" (Kaufman and Hart 330). So while in *You Can't Take It*

with You, the authors praise and underscore authenticity, eccentricity and difference, in *The American Way*, their stance on cultural pluralism has changed, being American constitutes being just like everyone else. Meredith writes that while neither Kaufman nor Hart thought the play would be successful they wanted to write something that would "show the dangers of Nazism and demonstrate their love for America" (549). Yet, the dangers of Nazism are present only in the final scenes of the play, everything else is a blend of patriotic kitsch, Kaufman and Hart's homage to their American identity.

At a later episode in the play, Karl the Gunther's son has to decide if he will enlist in the army during WWI. Karl's parents meanwhile argue whether he should go, Irma believes that he cannot go to Europe to fight against Germans as he will be forced to kill his own relatives, his father Martin believes that being American comes first,

> IRMA (bursting forth). I don't care! Let them throw rocks! It is better than that Karl should kill our people.
>
> MARTIN (finally facing her). They are not our people, Irma. [. . .] MARTIN. [. . .] But they are not our people anymore. [. . .] MARTIN. [. . .] the children that Karl will have will be Americans, and I am an American, Irma. And so are you! [. . .] MARTIN. [. . .]We cannot divide our allegiance, Irma—we are either Germans or we are Americans, and I say we are Americans. (Kaufman and Hart 369-70)

Kaufman and Hart emphasize that cultural and ethnic allegiance comes second to ones American identity. Written at a time when many Jews wanted nothing more than to blend in with the dominant ethnic groups, it is no surprise that the authors wrote a play where multiculturalism is sacrificed on the altar of American homogeneity.

The only thing in the play that remains from the ideals presented in *You Can't Take It with You*, are the tolerance and liberalism of the main character Martin Gunther. The first instance of this tolerance is shown when Gunther chooses a less profitable client, Miss Baxter a suffragette, for his shop over another because of her ideals. As Miss

Baxter campaigns for the right to vote members of the crowd at a political rally are heard saying, "Well, folks, after votes for women I suppose we ought to have votes for monkeys" (337). Writing about a time when women had no right to vote was no longer controversial, writing about civil rights or elimination of voting rights for Jews in Germany, was controversial and taboo. It is obvious that the authors are substituting a less painful topic for one which was more topical, because of the political atmosphere of the time.

The second act of the play opens with a Saturday night dance in Mapleton, everyone is listening to the radio which is broadcasting Charles Lindbergh's first flight over the Atlantic. Martin says, "And doing something that no man has ever done before. Doesn't that make you feel proud, children? Isn't it a wonderful story? How a little boy, a boy just like millions of other Americans" (Kaufman and Hart 381). The significance of Lindbergh's flight as an American is paralleled with Lindbergh's later association with Nazi groups (this is implied but never explicit in the play). If the play is ranting about anything it is intolerance and hatred. In effect it was Kaufman and Hart's only attempt at acknowledging the Nazi threat to Jews and to the world.

The denouement of the play comes when Karl, Martin's grandson, who has been unemployed throughout the Depression decides to go to a meeting of the Brown Shirts, a group with a Nazi agenda. Karl and his girlfriend Ruth are first approached by a youth with pamphlets, Ruth says, "Karl, don't read it… But it's vicious, that stuff. Do you want the same kind of thing here that they have in Germany" (Kaufman and Hart 389). The authors never speak directly about the regime that Nazi Germany has instituted, there is a double entendre, yet in a way this repressed address of the situation allowed them to play on their audiences' sympathies with the meaning of American identity more than an invocation against the perils of anti-Semitism.

> MARTIN. If you have your way—you and your friends—and they change this country the way they want it—it will not be what they tell you now, Karl. [. . .]MARTIN. You will have a job—yes—but you will live your life in a country that is one great prison. [. . .]MARTIN. [. . .]Your own children will not belong to you. They will be told from the cradle what to believe; at five they will have guns put in their hands. […]MARTIN. Yes, look at them! Look at what they are doing over there today. They have gone back to the Dark Ages. Don't think that I have not thought about you, Karl—how hard it is for you. I have. But your chance lies with the America that we have. (Kaufman and Hart 398-99)

Throughout his speech Martin highlights his definition of America as a free country, where no one tells a free man what to think or who to be. It is ironic that the authors do not realize that the America they are idealizing is the same place where you can only be an American, anything outside of the status quo (as shown by Martin himself when he feels like he needs to choose between his German identity and his American identity) is proscribed.

In the final scene of the play the leader of the brown shirts addresses their mission in America,

> Our program in the United States is this: We seek the spiritual regeneration of the youth of America after the model of the homeland… Let us not swerve from our high purpose; we must remake this country for Americans and Americans only. Other countries have cleaned their houses; the time is coming when we must do the same. (Kaufman and Hart 400)

It is once again ironic that Kaufman and Hart examine the rhetoric of anti-Semitic groups like these fictional brown shirts, who want to clean house, when the play has not introduced one person who is of a background different from the mainstream Anglo or Aryan background that the brown shirts are upholding as the true Americans. Bach writes about the characters of the play,

> It is one of the few plays Kaufman and Hart wrote about 'civilians' and the ones they put onstage are so one-dimensional you wonder if either author knew any outside of the Algonquin or Bucks County. They are all white-bread (and white) and middle class in sentiment and station… (186)

Other ethnicities do not exist on the canvas of the play, they are only typified by the masses at Ellis Island, but those are far away from the uniformity of white Americans in Mapleton.

At the end of the play, Martin Gunther is killed by the brownshirts when he says, that his German background does not matter all that counts is that he is "an American" (Kaufman and Hart 402). Venkateswarlu writes,

> Kaufman and Hart's *The American Way* goes a little further in the glorification of American democracy and builds a rhetoric in favor against the totalitarian mania for the racial theories. Being Jewish, they [Kaufman and Hart] are aware of the plight of the Jew and hence have believed that only in the liberal democracies the idea of racism could be destroyed. (109)

In fact, Hart's directorial role, in the Holocaust pageant *We Will Never Die* at Madison Square Garden (discussed in the chapter above), shows that he was prepared to lend his hand to Jewish causes or speak out against the Nazi threat, just not overtly in his plays. When Germany invaded Poland, the brown-shirts at the end of the play became too offensive for German nationalists in the US; RKO pictures which acquired rights to the film told Variety that the "anti-Nazi angle in the play will be written out" (Bach 187). When Hart retired to his estate in Bucks County after the play closed he let slip his chance to comment on the Nazi threat, Bach writes "He had neither the education nor the life experience to make him a subtle or profound commentator on political affairs and, in ducking the Nazi issue, he demonstrated that he lacked the daring to be a bold one" (187).

ANTI-CONSUMERISM AND LIBERAL IDEALS IN KAUFMAN AND HART PLAYS

All of the plays presented here are united in that they attempt to present either a healthy family unit or the dissolution of the family unit. Another major theme in all the plays is anti-consumerism and liberalism. Politically, New York City Jews, and most Jews in major American cities began to lean to the left heavily during the Depression.

Liberal mindedness pervaded the homes and works of New York City Jews during and after the Depression, and was seen in the new founded loyalty that American Jews began to feel for the Communist and Democratic parties. Wenger notes,

> Membership in the Communist Party peaked in the Depression years, with Jews constituting more than one-third of party membership in the New York area…For all the prominent Jewish radicals and intellectuals of the period, most Jews embraced leftist politics less as a matter of ideological commitment or party loyalty than as part of the social fabric of Jewish existence. (107)

It comes as no surprise then that many of the plays written by Kaufman and Hart touched on the issues that were important to them as members of the Jewish community, and as New York City Jews who felt that there was more constancy in family and friendship than in the pursuit of material goods and benefits.

Merrily We Roll Along and *You Can't Take It with You* are the two plays that in particular indict consumerism and juxtapose idealism versus greedy materialism. While the plays are not works of Marxist intent, they nevertheless do provide an alternative to the commodification of culture enacted by the hegemonic structure. In the former play, Jonathan Crale and Julia Glenn believe that Richard Niles has sold out; his art has stagnated because he had perverted his plays by writing successful comedies that have no depth to them. Crale condemns Niles,

> CRALE. Yes, and you were better off then with a failure than you are now with a hit, whichever way you look at it. […] CRALE. I mean—all this. (A wave of the arms that takes in the room) That Mongolian you've got out there. The whole life you're leading now. The people around you. It's doing something to you. You're not the same Richard I used to know.
>
> RICHARD. Why? Because I don't eat in those bum restaurants and don't have to worry about where my next dollar is coming from?
>
> CRALE. Yes—among other reasons. You're getting away from the guts of things into a whole mess of nice polite nothing. And that's what your plays are about. Why, I used to come into the studio and find you bubbling over with ideas—good,

> juicy ones. And in the past year all I've heard you talk about is how much the play grossed, and what you got for the movie rights, and you met Noel Coward. (160-61)

Crale points out that Niles' commodification of playwriting, his attachment to material goods and financial success, have led him to stop practicing his true art. He has been co-opted by the capitalistic structure imposed by the dominant society and this has invalidated not only his friendship but his creative energy: his new plays are about nothing, do not contribute to society, and merely entertain. Wenger writes

> The mood among American Jews in the 1930s was characterized more by fear than by hope. Depression-era adversity had particular meaning within the Jewish community, as Jews assessed their own fates amid the apparent collapse of American ideals and institutions. (198)

That the play traces the trajectory of the corruption of ideals is seen in the characterizations of almost all characters, including Cyrus Winthrop, who as we have seen in the previous section, has changed his name from his Jewish first and last names to Anglo-Saxon ones. Among the chatter around the party, when Winthrop is introduced, there is an explanation of how Winthrop made his money, through the invention of 'cellopaper' (cellophane). Although Winthrop does not play a large role in the play, he is the eccentric millionaire among a sea of artists, and he stands out only because no one thinks that his business is legitimate. One of the characters, Ogden says, "Imagine making a million dollars a year out of this! Cellopaper! I wish I had a graft like this" (131). Winthrop is an art connoisseur who invests his extra money in Jonathan Crale's paintings, and he seems to appreciate art, but in fact, art for him is nothing more than a commodity, its importance defined not by its intrinsic worth but rather by the monetary value that it will accrue in the future, he says,

> When you look at a canvas that's got that spark in it, and you feel it's going to mean something three hundred years from now, and you can own it—that's got horseracing beat a mile. Because you're betting on a man's talent—whether

> you're right about it—and that's more important than you, or your money, or anything else. (Kaufman and Hart 132)

This negative theme that everything, even art, has a monetary value pervades the entire play and results in the break-up of the 'family' dynamic between Jonathan Crale, Richard Niles, and Julia.

You Can't Take It with You, written two years later, once again highlights the importance of idealism in a battle against business interests. The play shows the fear that pervaded the American public when as a result of a high unemployment rate Jews were uncertain of their place in American society, of being able to find jobs, provide for their families and build their own version of the American Dream. The play suggests a new American Dream, one whose foundations included creativity, ingenuity, and family unity, instead of the Protestant work ethic or capitalism. The play is also about what it means to be happy, a question with which many immigrants far from the capitalist elite struggled. Happiness for the characters of *You Can't Take It with You*, signified an embrace of one's interests and passions, and a rejection of the authority of the dominant society which had imposed its own outdated ideals of material success on society (eventually leading to the downfall of that society).

In *You Can't Take It with You*, the families' differences are characterized by two of the older characters, Grandpa Vanderhof, who had quit his job 35 years before the play takes place and has devoted his life to reading, going to the zoo and enjoying himself, and Mr. Kirby, who works on Wall Street and cannot imagine leaving his job (although his son claims that as a child he wanted to be a trapeze artist).

> GRANDPA. Yes, you do. You said last night that at the end of a week in Wall Street you're pretty near crazy. Why do you keep on doing it?
>
> KIRBY. Why do I keep on—why, that's my business. A man can't give up his business.

> GRANDPA. Why not? You've got all the money you need. You Can't Take It with You.
>
> KIRBY. That's a very easy thing to say, Mr. Vanderhof. But I have spent my entire life building up my business. (312)

The title of the play comes from this exchange between the freewheeling Grandpa who suggests that people should not waste a minute of their time on things they hate and the capitalist Mr. Kirby who cannot understand life without work and Wall Street. In effect, Grandpa is deconstructing the cultural norms and prevailing social constructs by showing that the imposition of a culture where everyone earns a certain amount of money and no one lives a fulfilled life is an idea imposed by the hegemonic society, yet everyone should try to break free of these norms. In a way the play asks questions that only those from the margins could have been asking at this time. As a result of the experiences of New York Jews who went broke during the Depression, Jewish playwrights were the perfect medium for this message. The play warns its characters to find happiness outside of the workplace (a good suggestion considering that many people could not find jobs at the time),

> GRANDPA. There's always people that like work—you can't stop them. Inventions, and they fly the ocean. There're always people to go down to Wall Street, too—because they like it. But from what I've seen of you, I don't think you're one of them. I think you're missing something. [. . .] GRANDPA. …What I'm trying to say, Mr. Kirby is that I've had thirty-five years that nobody can take away from me, no matter what they do to the world. See?
>
> KIRBY. Yes, I do see. And it's a very dangerous philosophy, Mr. Vanderhof. It's—it's un-American. And it's exactly why I'm opposed to this marriage. I don't want Tony to come under its influence.
>
> TONY (a gleam in his eye). What's the matter with it, Father?
>
> KIRBY. Matter with it? Why, it's—it's downright Communism, that's what it is. (Kaufman and Hart 313)

Mr. Kirby confuses the Vanderhof family's quite American ideal of choosing to lead the life one wants with an imagined idea of Communism, (in fact, in the USSR unemployment was punishable by imprisonment). Similarly, Clifford Odets's major play with a Jewish theme, *Awake and Sing* also exhibits a comparable tendency of exposing the negative aspects of capitalism. On the subject of *Awake and Sing* Merwin notes, "The play is a searing critique of capitalism; as Steven Whitfield has written, American Jewish dramatists have often turned for subjects to the 'corrosive effects of business and to the resulting enfeeblement of the family and the ravaged ties of community'" and yet the same exact words can be used to describe the effects of capitalism that Kaufman and Hart are warning against both in *Merrily We Roll Along* and *You Can't Take It with You* (qtd. in Merwin 163).

Chapter IV: Behind the Brazilian Mask: Jewish Identity Under the Dictators

> To be a Jew is, naturally, not to have received as an out and out gift, those traditional blessings of good fairies: a native land, nationality, a place in history etc… (Memmi 255)

Although Clarice Lispector showed no interest in practicing Judaism during her lifetime, she agreed to be buried in a Jewish ceremony. Only one of Clarice's two sons was present at the funeral, Paulo, the other son Pedro was living with his father at the time in Montevideo. "Clarice Lispector was not a religious Jew but she allowed, before dying, that she would be interred in a traditional Jewish burial ceremony…With much difficulty, Paulo pronounced at the edge of the grave the 'Kaddish' and mouthed a verse from the Old Testament." ("O Adeus a Lispector", 14). Yet, in fact Clarice's religious identity was such a mystery to everyone around her that her Jewish funeral did not close the final chapter to her life. Nelson Vieira writes "[Nelida] Piñon even mentioned that at one point in her life Lispector wanted to be buried in a nearby Christian cemetery. In fact, although she was buried in the Israelite cemetery of Caju in Rio, a Catholic mass was held for her seven days after her death, with her family and friends in attendance" (121).

Clarice's decision to spend eternity in a Jewish cemetery is of interest to this study as an ironic, and telling, endnote for a life and literary output that consistently defied Jewish identity. In her personal life, Clarice wanted to be known only as a Brazilian, and as a Brazilian writer. Some friends and colleagues who attended Clarice's funeral were surprised to discover that she was Jewish. In my study, this final surprise, appearing at the ceremonial farewell recognition of Clarice's life, will serve to highlight the importance of an examination of the core personal and literary themes that throughout Clarice's life worked in tandem to keep her Jewish identity at a safe distance.

Many existing studies analyzing the work of Clarice are achieved by pursuing one among multiple paths: tracing the influence of the writer's autobiography, textual analysis focusing on philosophical, religious and mystical concepts, or dissections of her literary craft. Furthermore, a number of critics have analyzed Clarice's work as having or pertaining to a certain Jewish sensibility. A number of critics have claimed a thematization of Jewish markers in Lispector's works. There have been studies of Macabéa's name (the protagonist of *A hora da estrela*) as a direct reference to the book of Maccabees from the Hebrew Bible by Berta Waldman and Nelson Vieira, among others, and discussions of pure and impure foods in *A paixão segundo G.H.* also by Waldman. There have also been a number of critics who have disputed an exclusively Jewish thematic in Clarice's works. Naomi Lindstrom notes that her works display influences of a mixed Judeo-Christian symbolism ("Pattern" 114). Regina Igel goes further and completely excludes Clarice from her work *Entre passos e rastros* on Jewish authors in Brazil because of the absence of Jewish themes in her work.

This study will take a different approach from that of the authors who have sought to ascribe Jewish thematic material to Clarice or disregard her Jewish identity as an issue. Instead, I detail the development of a set of literary decisions linked to her Jewish background. Clarice internalized her Jewish origin and refracted it onto her life and work. Clarice constructed a literary identity representing the liminal classes of Brazil, the blue collar workers—especially maids, Afro-Brazilians, and poor northeasterners. Self-exile allowed Clarice to banish the ethnic roots that she saw as limiting to her freedom of expression and authorial independence. Beyond tracing these two themes, the study will claim that the Portuguese language, which for her family became a second language and the one in which Clarice wrote her works, became for her a battleground on which she both substituted her ethnic identity and fought for a new one.

Exile is a theme essential to the Lispector family's immigration to Brazil and to Clarice's childhood. Clarice's reaction to this exile, and response to the injustices suffered by her family, finds outlet through the characters in her work. Identity projection, the method of distancing oneself from one's historical identity and embracing an imagined identity that suits ones immediate needs, and the substitution of the Portuguese language as a cultural medium, both served as critical techniques in producing Clarice's most important novels, *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A hora da estrela*. These literary techniques are also the keys to the development of her worldview and methodical campaign to be judged as a Brazilian and as a champion of a certain Brazilian type.

On a broader scale this analysis will serve as a reference for other studies on immigrant writers whose assimilation into the mainstream culture of their adopted cultures resulted in a displacement of their authorial personae in favor of a substituted identity.

GO DOWN, MOSES: THE LISPECTOR EXILE AND THE JEWISH SUBALTERN

The theme of exile will be taken up first, as it is linked most directly with Clarice's childhood, and her efforts as an adult to retell the story of her coming to Brazil. Exile will also be linked to the facts of Clarice's assimilation into Brazilian culture.

Clarice sought to deny the experience of exile – to the point of changing basic facts of her childhood, even her birth date – as part of creating a Brazilian identity for herself. Through her characters, particularly in her two most important novels, *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A hora da estrela*, Clarice wanted to represent opposing ends of the social spectrum in Brazilian society onto which she was able to project slices of herself: a

privileged white woman, and a poor girl of the Brazilian northeast. Representing Brazilians involved exiling her ethnic Jewish identity, identity projection as a literary act of exiling. These themes define the limits and extent of Clarice's attempts to de-ethnicize her personal history and instead project her otherwise hidden identity into literary works. Because the first chapter is in part a biographical foundation, it includes analysis of the Lispector family, and the work of Clarice's sister, Elisa.

There will be more personal history, and less textual analysis, in this chapter, and this is an intentional choice. Personal correspondence, interviews – both conducted by Clarice and in which she was the subject -- and the work of Elisa, help to clarify the extent to which Clarice was working against being defined as a Jew. Furthermore, the historical conditions leading to the Lispector family immigration to Brazil, and Brazilian politics in the first half of the twentieth century as it relates to the Jewish question, need to be considered at length as well. These historical facts provide the full context for the non-Jewish Jew Clarice as a Brazilian writer, a Brazilian writer not only involved in an act of self-exile, but projecting her identity onto characters from within non-Jewish marginalized Brazilian classes.

In his essay, "Reflections on Exile", Edward Said writes, "Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both" (185). Said's vision of exile as loss that is essentially bound to the nature of existence, suggests exile as a means of agency for the immigrant writers Clarice and her sister Elisa. "It is not surprising that so many exiles seem to be novelists... and intellectuals" (Said 181). The Lispector sisters would chose divergent paths in exercising exile as agency in their literary output. These differences demonstrate both a distancing from the Jewish self and reconciliation with it. It is, in fact, the tension between

attempting to tell Moses to 'go down', and on the other hand, commanding Jewish identity to resurface from its marginal status in Brazil, that serves as Said's lost love in the case of the Lispectors. Exile from Judaism is never completely relinquished, even if, on the surface, that love of Jewish self, particularly in the case of Clarice, seems distanced, if not forsaken.

In Clarice's *A paixão segundo G.H.*, the narrator G.H. faces down a cockroach in her maid's room, the novel presents a triangulation of fluid identities. The cockroach itself signifies the tension between exile from Jewishness and reluctant recognition of the Jewish subaltern, raised to surface existence, the Afro-Brazilian maid represents the 'other' onto which a liminal Jewish identity is projected, the wealthy white 'dona da casa' or G.H. is Clarice's identity as an upper-class Brazilian as seen by the public or the mainstream. A comparison to Kafka is obvious, and his use of the cockroach as a symbol of the protagonist's banishment from family and society, and as a hideous representation of self. In fact, late in Clarice's life, a Jewish colleague compared her writing's distance from Jewish themes to Kafka's work, a comparison that Clarice enjoyed. In *A paixão segundo G.H.,* Clarice's distance from, and attraction to, the cockroach marks the line in the sand of the existential battle between her subaltern Jewishness and Brazilian identity:

> I couldn't deny it any longer. I don't know what it was that I could no longer deny, but I could not any longer. Nor could I any longer save myself, like before, with a civilization that would help me to deny what I was seeing. I was seeing all of it, the cockroach. The cockroach is an ugly, brilliant being. The cockroach is inside out. I don't mean that it has an inside and an outside; I mean she is such. What it has exposed is what I hide inside myself: from my outside being exposed I ignored my inside. (88)

Yet it will not be enough to paint Clarice's cockroach as the Jewish subaltern alone. Ultimately, I will argue that the cockroach in the maid's room dually reflects the Jewish subaltern and the marginalized in Brazilian society. Clarice's decision was to internalize

her Jewish self and project it as an identity from Brazil's liminal classes. Furthermore, Clarice's personal exile specifically from the historical truth of her family is a precursor to her textual decisions related to identity.

Elisa, who was also a novelist, albeit not as famous as her youngest sister, was acutely aware of a longing for the Jewish homeland. Her semi-autobiographical novel is aptly titled *No exilio* (1948), and it begins with the proclamation of the foundation of Israel. Unlike her sister, though, Clarice does not embrace a homeland outside of Brazil; she rejects the Ukrainian homeland, which forced the family to become refugees in Brazil, and never mentions Elisa's chosen homeland in any of her writing. In fact, Clarice would go so far as to ask her sister to not re-publish *No exilio* once it had become a success. "Elisa decided to republish *No exilio* through the publishing house Ebrasa... The book was republished in 1971. Clarice Lispector did not find the republication of the book a good idea" (Ferreira 256).

Though Said's definition of the exile falls short of embracing Clarice's very peculiar, but ever-present, exilic tension, exilic subjects can also jealously insist on a right to belong to the homeland that adopted them. The level of zealous devotion that Clarice exhibited in her love for Brazil is, in fact, another form of the exilic longing to belong. The search for belonging within an adopted homeland is as intrinsically a characteristic of exilic writers as not belonging. Further, in Clarice's case, it was bound to a self-imposed exile of her Jewish roots. Mirroring the cockroach in *A Paixão segundo G.H.,* is the coming of age female protagonist Macabéa in *A hora da estrela*. The white male narrator (Rodrigo S.M.) from southern Brazil in *A hora da estrela* recasts Clarice's immigrant childhood in the character of Macabéa, with her lower social standing among the poor of the Brazilian northeast.

Clarice was too young to remember the Lispector family's immigration to Brazil – she was less than two years old. For Clarice, who went to great lengths to make a labyrinth of her personal history, the inability to remember the journey from the Ukraine to Brazil is credible. Nonetheless, the words that Clarice uses to describe her lack of recall demonstrate her willfulness in distancing her Jewish roots, and a subtle, if not outright disdain for the immigrant experience. Clarice writes in her 1971 articles for the *Jornal do Brasil*:

> Deve ter viajado de trem da Ucrânia para a Romênia e desta para Hamburgo. Nada sei, recém-nascida que eu era. (*A Descoberta do mundo* 547)
>
> I must have travelled by train from the Ukraine to Romania and from there to Hamburg. But I shall never know, for I was an infant carried in my mother's arms. (*Discovering the World* 461)

Yet she did not travel alone, and Clarice's family members could have filled in the details had she found worthy of pursuing when she was old enough to ask.

Pinkous and Mania Lispector, and their three daughters, Lea – who would come to be called Elisa, Tania, and Haia (Clarice), received their visas to Brazil in Bucharest, 1922. The youngest of the three, Haia was born in 1920, when the family stopped in the village of Tchechelnik in the Ukraine on their way from Russia to Brazil. Clarice's naturalization documents from 12 January 1943, list her as being born in Tchechelnik on 10 December 1920 to Pedro and Marieta Lispector (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL/Dp 21). The family came to Brazil in 1922, yet throughout her life Clarice would maintain in all interviews that she was only two months old when she came to Brazil, when in fact she was almost two years old.

Considering that Elisa would write in detail about the experience of immigration, and the fact that Clarice could have asked several family members older than herself for details about the family's experience, "I shall never know" is not a statement of forlorn

fact, but an example of Clarice willfully choosing to deny a specific past that could have been rescued. Clarice goes further, when speaking about the trip from Europe. She writes,

> A primeira foi com menos de dois meses de idade, da Alemanha (Hamburgo) ao Recife: não sei que meio de transporte meus pais usaram para chegar da Ucrânia, onde nasci, para Hamburgo, onde meu pai procurou emprego mas, felizmente para nós todos, não achou. Nada sei sobre essa viagem de imigrantes: devíamos todos ter a cara dos imigrantes de Lazar Segall. (*A Descoberta do Mundo* 545)
>
> I made my first sea-voyage when I was less than two months old. We sailed from Hamburg to Recife: I do not know what means of transport my parents used in order to travel from the Ukraine where I was born, to Hamburg, where my father tried to find work, but fortunately for all concerned he was unsuccessful. I can remember nothing about the voyage which brought us to Brazil. No doubt we must have looked like those immigrants in the paintings of Lasar Segall. (*Discovering the World* 459)

A measure of Clarice's reluctance to believe there was anything worth re-discovering in the family experience, if not outright disdain for it, rings through in her dismissive comment about her family's affinity to the Jewish immigrants Lasar Segall depicted in his works. At the same time by naming Segall, a modernist painter who emigrated to Brazil in 1923, she is signifying a link between her own experience and that of Jewish subjects of Segall's paintings. Again this shows an ambivalence of feeling in regard to her identity; she denies it while at the same time identifying herself with the specifically Jewish 'greenhorns' that Segall is portraying in his painting 'The Ship of Immigrants' (1939).

Elisa wrote in *No exilio*, about the family's immigration and the hardships experienced on their way to a new land of religious and cultural freedom. In fact, Elisa's autobiographic intentions are as obvious as her sister Clarice's attempts to deny the family's experience as belonging to a recoverable part of her own personal history.

As Elisa uses a similar name to her own, Lizza, for the narrator of *No exilio*, it is necessary to conflate the fictional Elisa and the fictional Lispector family experience with the actual experience that Clarice "shall never know." In an interview granted to Regina Igel, Elisa commented on the text's similarity to her real life:

> O *Exilio* tem muito de autobiográfico e de minha ligação com meus ancestrais. Ele representou, para mim, uma forma de liberação. Precisei export as angústias, as tristezas, o terror de uma menina que viu os pogroms, os assaltos da multidão e a destruição sistemática de sua casa e as de outros judeus lá na Rússia. Aquela menina que não entendia nada daquilo ficou dentro de mim. A tristeza me acompanhou durante todo o fazer do livro, mas terminei-o num dia alegre para nós, quando foi aprovada pela ONU a criação de Israel. (qtd. in Igel 184)
>
> *No exilio* has a lot of the autobiographical and my connection to my ancestors. It represented, for me, a form of liberation. I needed to expose the anguish, sadness, and terror of a girl who saw the pogroms, the assaults of the multitude and the systematic destruction of her house and those of other Jews there in Russia. That girl, who did not understand anything, stayed inside of me. The sadness accompanied me during the entire act of writing the book, but I finished it on a happy day for us, when the creation of Israel was approved by the UN.

The distance between the sisters on the subject of family history, and more specifically, Jewishness, could not be wider. Elisa's reference to the act of writing *No exilio* as a "form of liberation" could not be further from the image of a woman trapped in her maid's room with a cockroach. Elisa uses exile as the agency through which to liberate herself, and, furthermore, notes that she still carries within her "that girl who could not understand." The girl who could not understand, but who is still a part of the Jewish woman and writer liberated by the act of creating *No exilio* – and who creates a link between her personal liberation and the creation of Israel -- diverges from the Lispector who "shall never know" and who dismisses any attempt to recreate the family experience as bound to be no more than Lasar Segall's huddled, identity-less 'ship of immigrants'. Naomi Lindstrom writes that Clarice's stifled Jewishness "is manifested with a vengeance in *No exilio*" ("Clarice Lispector and Elisa Lispector" 58). A similar

intertextuality occurs in the work of Evgenia Ginzburg and Vasilii Aksyonov, issues of identity that remain hidden in the work of Ginzburg become so important to Aksyonov that he rewrites his own fictional reworking of his mother's autobiography.

A Lispector family fact that has to be acknowledged is the age difference between the sisters. Elisa was the oldest of the three Lispector daughters; born in 1911, she was aware of all the hardships that the family had experienced, while Clarice was the youngest and did not experience the pogroms and anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe first hand. As Elisa notes in talking about *No exilio* (Igel 184), she in fact, had witnessed such acts of cruelty and hate directed at Jews that she felt a need to expose her experiences to the public. Lack of firsthand experience is an obvious reason for Clarice to stay away from specifically portraying the experience of immigration.

Elisa goes even further in creating links between her creative muse and her Jewish ancestry, citing an acute sense of anti-Semitism that appeared as the "primeira fonte de sua amargura" or "first fount of her bitterness" (*No exilio* 128). The main character of the novel is Lizza, the Russian name for Elisa, who experiences anti-Semitism and hatred directly while traveling through the Ukraine.

Elisa includes in the novel a number of examples of typical anti-Semitic dialogues that take place between the natives of the Ukraine and the Jewish family: "'Estado Judeo!' ouviu alguém comentar com raiva, por baixo da janela do vagão. 'Esses judeus...'" / "'The Jewish state!' she heard someone comment with anger, underneath the window of the train car. "'These Jews...'" (*No exilio* 6). Typically Elisa uses the ellipsis to signify any type of insult or slur directed at Jews, so anything that the reader can imagine is an anti-Semitic rant is coded with the ellipsis in her text. There is a keen understanding by the author and her stand-in narrator that the family has no choice but to leave a land where they are not welcome; that exile is, in fact, no willful choice to forget but a forced

abandoning of a homeland that had rejected them as Jews. For Elisa, it is Said's love lost, forever relegated to a type of existence impossible to recover in any form but through its 'lost' status. The Jewish state becomes her imaginary homeland.

In the novel, Lizza notes that at some point the insults and abuses the family had hurled in their direction no longer disturbed them (*No exilio* 10). They were called by the derogatory word "zhid"[7] repeatedly by the Cossacks they encountered, "Jidowskaia…Deixem aqui todo o ouro" / "Jidowskaia…Leave here all of the gold," with the feminine adjectival form of the noun—Jewess Elisa references the Russian "zhid" (*No exilio* 11). The Lispector family was aware that the word which gave them a definition as a family, people and tribe was wielded by the greater world as justification for a violent conflict: "Judeu e a palavra de incitamento, a tocha que ilumina e guia, em todo o mundo, os sangrentos e [tadicos] pogroms"/ "Jew is a word of incitement, a torch that illuminates and guides, in the whole world, the bloody and methodical pogroms" (*No exilio* 33).

'I ALSO WANT INCONSEQUENCE'

Ferreira, one of Clarice's biographers, suggests that the horror of anti-Semitic Russia, the suffering of the Lispector family in Russia and during the immigration, and later the suffering of the Jews under Hitler led Clarice to want to hide her Ukrainian birth. She was born in the Ukraine, her parents had come from the Podolia province of the Ukraine (formerly a province in Russia), they had lived in the towns of Teplyk, and then Haysyn and en route to leaving the Ukraine they stopped in Chechelnik where Clarice was born (Moser 26). It is interesting, then, that Clarice never denied being Jewish. She

[7] Whereas in Russian the word 'zhid' is a slur or a pejorative of 'evrei' or Jew, in Ukrainian and Polish the word 'zhid' signifies Jew colloquially.

would sometimes deny her place of birth, "My homeland left no trace in me, except through the blood heritage, I never set foot in Russia," (Lispector qtd. in Moser, 10), yet, Ferreira suggests that by denying the origins she was by implication hiding her Jewish ancestry as well (84). Ferreira feels that references to Clarice's Jewish ancestry bothered her more than being born on Eastern European soil. In most interviews she would deny a Russian background not a Ukrainian background, probably because at the time of her birth the Ukraine was losing its wars of independence and would later become a part of the Soviet Union (which Clarice and Brazilian critics who wrote about her typically conflated with Russia).

In *Agua viva*, Clarice Lispector speaks about the pain and heaviness of an ancestry that she no longer wants to carry around with her,

> Mine is a new era and it ushers me to the present. Do I have the courage? For the time being I do: because I come from long suffering, I come from the hell of love, but now I'm free of you. I come from far away—from a weighty ancestry. I who come from the pain of living. And don't want it anymore I want the vibrancy of joy. I want the sovereignty of Mozart. But I also want inconsequence. (*The Stream of Life* 10)

Clarice's self-exile is obvious here; she suggests that she wants her Jewishness to be inconsequential. She no longer wants the burden of the "chosen people." She wants her ethnicity not to matter so that she can be free. The freedom she constantly talks about, the freedom of not having a mother and of not having a heavy ancestry, are the highest moral principles. Only free from ancestry and family can she act out her own destiny as a human being free from inherited responsibility, one who does not live to fulfill the roles prescribed to her by her tribe, ethnicity or other inclusionary or exclusionary markers.

In her work *Agua viva*, Clarice writes, "Am I free? There's something that still restrains me. Or am I fastening myself to it? Either way, it's like this: I'm not completely free because I'm tied to everything" (*The Stream of Life* 25). Again, Clarice makes an

interesting case for freedom from identity and the past. On the one hand she claims that a person must be free to follow his or her path and to live life without any ties to ethnicity, culture, religion, markers that were passed on by ancestors. On the other hand she shows that the ties made for her before she came into the world have already bound her in many ways. And then she unties herself again from all these connections. "I was born like this: tearing from my mother's uterus a life that always was eternal" (*The Stream of Life* 25). For a moment she believes that through birth, through the painful 'tearing,' she has severed all of her ties to her family, her ancestors; yet this is just an illusion as she comes back to this trope often in her personal letters and in her fiction.

At the same time, it is possible that her estrangement from Jewishness and her references to a heavy ancestry hint at psychological daggers forged by her birth and upbringing. We know from biographical sources and from Elisa's *No exilio* that their mother became an invalid after giving birth to Clarice, her last child. Clarice writes,

> Minha mãe já estava doente, e , por uma superstição bastante espalhada, acreditava-se que ter um filho curava uma mulher de uma doença. Então fui deliberadamente criada: com amor e esperança. Só que não curie minha mãe. E sinto até hoje essa carga de culpa: fizeram-me para uma missão determinada e eu falhei. (*A descoberta do mundo* 153).
>
> My mother was in poor health and there was a well-known superstition which claimed that a woman could be cured of illness if she gave birth to a son. So I was deliberately conceived, with love and hope. Only I failed to cure my mother. And to this day I carry this burden of guilt: my parents conceived me for a specific mission and I failed them. (*Discovering the World* 149)

It is possible that Clarice refers to a Jewish superstition popular in the shtetls from which her family came. Clarice's reticence about her birth and background could be related to the psychological complex of believing that she caused her mother's death and that she was an unwanted child, born as a result of her family belonging to a community which nourished beliefs that lacked a scientific basis. Benjamin Moser claims in his recently

published autobiography of Clarice that the girls' mother became infected with syphilis after she was raped during a pogrom (27). One superstition at the time claimed a woman could be cured if she became pregnant. Wherever the blame for her unhappy childhood lies, be it a sick mother, poverty, or immigration, it is obvious that all of these things are effects of being born into a liminal group whose members had to fight very hard to survive.

Clarice notes in her chronicles that her childhood was not altogether unclouded. She writes about trips to Olinda (from Recife) where the family took early morning swims,

> Minha capacidade de ser feliz se revelava. Eu me agarrava, dentro de uma infância muito infeliz, a essa ilha encantada que era a viagem diária. (*A descoberta do mundo* 250)
>
> My capacity for happiness was unfolding. And amidst the unhappiness of my childhood, I clung to this daily trip as if I were travelling to some enchanted island. (*Discovering the World* 224)

Clarice writes in an article titled 'One Final Clarification', the title alone highlighting the importance that Clarice placed on the issue:

> Recebo de vez em quando carta perguntando-me se sou russa ou brasileira, e me rodeiam de mitos. Vou esclarecer de uma vez portodas: não há simplesmente mistério que justifique mitos, lament muito. E a históia é a seguinte: nasci na Ucrânia, terra de meus pais. Nasci numa aldeia chamada Tchechelnik, qua não figura no mapa de tão pequeno e insignificante. Quando minha mãe estava grávida de mim, meus pais já estavam se encaminhando para os Estados Unidos ou Brasil, ainda não haviam decidido: pararam em Tchechelnik para eu nascer, e prosseguiram viagem. Cheguei ao Brasil com apenas dois meses de idade. (*A Descoberta do mundo* 498)
>
> From time to time I receive letters asking me if I am Russian or Brazilian and people invent all sorts of myths about me. Let me clarify this matter once and for all: I am sorry to have to tell you that there are no mysteries and these myths are untrue. My story is as follows: I was born in the Ukraine, the homeland of my parents. I was born in a village called Tchechelnik, which is too small and insignificant to appear on any map. When my mother was expecting me, my

> parents were already planning to emigrate either to the United States or Brazil. They waited on in Tchechelnik until I was born and then set out on their long journey. I was two months old when I arrived in Brazil. (*Discovering the World* 418)

Here, just as in a few other interviews given by Clarice, she refers to her Eastern European birth, and it is not apparent which is the source of greater discomfort-- her Jewish ancestry, which she does not mention at all, or her Ukrainian birth.

Clarice's relegation of her family's actual geographic origins as impossible to map is a convenient cartographic fact for Clarice and the consistent commentary in her writing and attempt to, as much as possible, reinvent her history as purely Brazilian and minimize the existence of the town of her birth. A *Jornal do Comercio* obituary quotes her as saying "I was born in the Ukraine; in a village that does not exist on a map, Chechelnik, and came to Brasil, Recife, at two months old. My first language was the Portuguese" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, "Morte de Clarice Lispector"). In fact, Clarice was born in Chechelnik on December 10, 1920 and they did not arrive in Brazil until sometime in 1922, when Clarice was between one and two years old (Moser 8). By lying in order to decrease her time outside of Brazil she sought to authenticate her Brazilian presence.

The ethnic markers she calls "heavy ancestry" do not relate to being Ukrainian. In the Ukraine the family would not have been considered Ukrainian; they would have been considered Jews. For Clarice and the other members of her family, the Ukrainians were responsible for the misery the Jews experienced. Her denial of Ukraine/Russia/the Soviet Union was only a natural rejection of the acceptance that her first homeland had withheld from her. Clarice was afraid of being labeled an immigrant, a fear that Regina Igel reads into Elisa's semi auto-biographical work as well. She writes:

> [. . .] the protagonist Lizza, was marginalized in Russia for being a Jew. The movement of rejection continued in Brazil, where she was victimized for being an

> immigrant, and among the parents of the mother, maltreated for being poor....The aunts and uncles present an ambiguous attitude of those who at the same time welcome and also reject. (Igel 187)

Although the first rejection of the family occurs at the hands of their Ukrainian counterparts, the second rejection takes place on Brazilian soil where Jews who had immigrated earlier maintain a superiority in their relationship to their recently arrived relatives. Jews who are already in Brazil are able to get jobs and manipulate the language. The recent arrivals are dependent on them for support and lack a means of communication. This situation creates a complex in the child who will later try to prove to everyone that she can speak the language more fluently than everyone else. In Elisa's fictional account, she writes about Lizza's loneliness as an immigrant child who had very little in common with her playmates who would play with her out of pity instead of with interest, "Lizza stayed alone....the noisy happiness of the others did not infect her, even when they showed themselves to be benevolent and condescending with her an immigrant" (102-03).

Later on, made it apparent that she did not want a biography of her written and that she would leave very little for the writer to go on;

> It will be very difficult for someone to write my biography. From the University of Boston I received a letter asking that I send them a piece of paper where I had noted something, or the originals of an already published book, anything would have served. It wasn't for a possible biography of mine. I did not send them anything, because of laziness. And really because after I die, the opinions that people have about me will be of little interest to me, I will die free. I want to die in the act of writing. ("Brainstorm")

This again underlines her intense privacy and her self-exile from any tie to her own past, her disinterest in having her private life on display and her devotion to writing. She again brings up the notion of freedom, making it very clear that she will be free when death comes only if she has withheld any biographical information from those who wish to

write about her. She moves seamlessly from the discussion of origins and background to the discussion of writing. Writing for Clarice replaces her homeland. Her exile ends in writing. In one of her chronicles, she refers to a conversation with one of her sons during which she denied delving into her private life, "Um de meus filhos me diz: Porque é que você ás vezes escreve sobre assuntos pessoais? Respondi-lhe que, em primeiro lugar, nunca toquei, realmente, eme meus assuntos pessoais, sou até uma pessoa muito secreta" (*A descoberta do mundo* 435). "One of my little boys asks me: 'Why do you sometimes write about personal things?' I explain that in the first place I have never really touched on personal matters, for by nature I am a very private sort of person" (*Discovering the World* 370).

Later on in her life as a writer, she would very often edit the short blurbs about her that editors were keen to publish or she would send a detailed list of what she preferred they include. Her number one priority was always that she be identified as a Brazilian. In a letter to the editor of the *New Mexico Quarterly*, Mrs. Carolyn Addir, she writes: "Although I was born while my family was en route to Brazil from Ukraine, I am a Brazilian citizen and my whole upbringing and education were Brazilian. I would be grateful if you stress that fact rather than my birthplace." In a hand-written draft of the same letter she writes, "I have always considered myself Brazilian." This is later crossed out and does not appear in the typed version of the letter. There is a written description of herself and her biography: "Brazilian writer: married to Maury Gurgel Valente, Brazilian diplomat." The final draft of the letter from January 1957 shows the following addition: "I have always considered myself Brazilian, I am a Brazilian citizen, and the place of my birth is wholly unimportant to me either personally or professionally" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL/CP 089). It is fascinating that she should write so many drafts of what is essentially very basic biographical information. Yet, it is exactly this attention

to biographical detail which shows how attached Clarice was to the idea of her own Brazilianness, and to her created and imaginary identity as nothing but a Brazilian writer.

To Clarice, being Brazilian, above all, meant being able to function in and manipulate the Portuguese language. But it also meant living in Brazil; she was in love with the country, its culture and its landscape. While in Europe with her husband Maury during the war, she lamented the life of a diplomat's wife, she told a friend, "I'm dying of longing for home and for Brazil…This isn't traveling: traveling is leaving and going home whenever you want to, traveling is being able to move. But traveling this way is awful: it's serving out sentences in different places" (Moser 160).

To fabricate an exclusively Brazilian identity, barring all other influences, while Europe was in turmoil – a subject that will be reviewed in more detail later in this chapter – could be seen as a matter of self-preservation. To continue maintaining her *brasilidade* after World War II suggests that Clarice was constantly involved in the process of legitimizing her Brazilian self, which incrementally extended to her literary works.

THE PURSUIT OF JEWISH KNOWLEDGE OR APPROACH/AVOIDANCE?

No exilio is more than just a story of the abuses the family suffered. Less extensively, Elisa's book examines the limitations of Judaism. Elisa points out that Pinkous Lispector (who had taken on the Brazilian name Pedro) had studied religion like his ancestors, but that the choice was a compromise forced by society. In her semi-fictional account Clarice's sister claims that had it not been for the restrictions placed on the practitioners of the Jewish faith, both from inside the tribe and outside of it, their father would have been drawn to studies such as math and science that would have benefited the outside world (*No exilio* 58). Elisa places the following rhetorical question and her own answer in the text:

> ‘Eh! Judeu! Que sabe você, senão mercadejar?’ Em verdade ele nada mais sabia. Isto e, sabia, sim. Sabia orar a Deus, sabia...: mas que valia tinham esses saberes nos dias que corriam?
>
> ‘Eh! Jew! What do you know, if not how to trade?' In truth he didn't know anything else, this he knew, yes. He knew how to pray to God, he knew...: but of what value was this knowledge in those days? (*No exilio* 50)

For Jews who had left the Pale of Settlement in the 1920s education became a passport to the world. A similar theme of the value that education had for Jews educated in the early part of the twentieth century crops up both in the history of Evgenia Ginzburg and Moss Hart. Reading influences personal advancement and determine the fates of the authors’ auto-biographical characters in their memoirs. Hart’s lack of a formal education was a source of pain and embarrassment to him throughout his adult life, despite his success without it.

Nelson Vieira, who interviewed several members of the Lispector family, writes, “In a conversation with her cousin Vera, I learned that Lispector’s father was a self-taught Russian immigrant who valued learning and study and assiduously read the Bible at home -- undoubtedly a motivation for his daughters’ pursuit of knowledge” (*Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature* 110). Vieira relates Pedro Lispector’s interest in reading to the university educations his daughters received in Brazil, where post-secondary education for women was not the norm yet.

Elisa’s semi-autobiographical characters, Pinkous and Marim, read Sholem Aleichem, Mendele Mocher Sforim, and Hayyim Nachman Bialik. Only afterwards were they interested in reading Tolstoy, Gorki, and Pushkin (*No exilio* 31.) Her characters were more interested in reading literature in Yiddish and Hebrew than the classics of Russia. The Lispector parents grew up in provincial towns more tied to Jewish literature than to Russian literature. The Soviet-Jewish poet Osip Mandelstam (born in Warsaw but raised in Lithuania), as a counter example, was raised in a house where Russian literature took

first place, followed by European writers, and, lastly, at the bottom of the shelf stood the Jewish texts, dusty from disuse (*Noise of Time* 12).

Rarely are there references to Jewish literary figures in Clarice's work, but when there is such a reference, she clearly notes their ethnicity when, in fact, such highlighting seems arbitrary, at best. For example, she mentions a number of writers commenting on George Sand. One of these was Proust, who encouraged André Maurois to begin to value her: "When Marcel Proust was sick, his mother and grandmother, Jewish women, read to him in a loud voice the books of George Sand" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, "George Sand, A Grande Outra" CL 37pi). Clarice Lispector is writing about George Sand, but she is identifying with the Jewish family of Proust who was farsighted enough to create in the son/grandson the love and worship for a great literary figure. In this instance, she ties herself to the legacy of Jewish children who became writers because of the love of literature that their Jewish parents instilled in them. Clarice does not make use of this legacy of Jewish literacy in her fiction, unlike Elisa, but it does appear in her non-fiction. As will also be evident from the interviews that Clarice conducted, she seemed to be proud of the legacy of famous Jewish writers, and it appears that while almost all aspects of Jewish ethnicity made her uncomfortable, the high culture of Jewish literacy appealed to her.

Likewise, Clarice's work inspired Samuel Rawet (1929-1984), another major Brazilian-Jewish novelist, to seek out the Jewish awareness in her fiction, when he wrote, "I am thinking of writing a work about Clarice Lispector... I find Clarice Lispector an exceptional figure for a number of motives. The title of the work is 'The Adventure of a Jewish Consciousness in Clarice Lispector'" ("A necessidade de escrever contos").

In the same year that Rawet proposed using Clarice's Jewish 'consciousness' in a work of his own, ironically, the publishing house Ebrasa was considering releasing a

new edition of Elisa's *No exilio*. Ferreira suggests that Clarice was afraid that too many details of her family life, as well as her origins, would become available to the reading public in Brazil. Ferreira may be correct, as Clarice did not want any reference in print to her Russian birth.

Probably, she feared that the story of the Lispectors, novelized by Elisa, would awaken references to her own Jewish origins, provoking some debate, in turn, of her Brazilianness, which for Clarice was insufferable. But Elisa saw the situation from another angle. Being older and having lived for a longer time in her native land, she had frequently enjoyed and absorbed, with her father, the Jewish traditions with more intensity than Clarice Lispector. (Ferreira 256)

Not only was Clarice's reaction to Elisa's book not very supportive, but Ferreira cites Bella Josef, a literary critic, friends with both women, who related to her that she had never heard the two sisters discussing each other's works (274). Yet, it is not at all true that the two women did not discuss each other's works. In fact, the sisters' collected letters provide testimony that shows that they were constantly discussing and reading each other works, which speaks to the spirit of collaboration that Memmi defined as one of the principle components of a Jewish identity. In 1945 the correspondence between the sisters often centers on the subject of Elisa's novel *Além da fronteira* (1945), Clarice writes,

> Quando terei um exemplar de seu livro? Que vontade de lê-lo. Imagino que você deve estar se aborrecendo com a demorra da publicação mas, você bem sabe, as coisas são assim mesmo no Brasil e certamente em qualquer parte do mundo [. . .]
>
> When will I have a copy of your book? How I want to read it! I imagine that you must be absolutely impatient with the delay of the publication but, as you well know this is the way things are in Brazil and certainly in any part of the world [. . .] (*Correspondências* 80)

> Querida, fiquei muito amolada com a história do livro sair errado, me abborreci enormemente. Você não tem culpa porque é de esperar que uma editor boa como a Leitura faça bem uma revisão e tenha pessoal adequado para isso. [. . .] Querida, como eu quero ler seu livro! Que horror esperar até que venha d. Zuza! não há nenhum jeito de mandar antes? [. . .] Talvez aconteça comigo o que aconteceu com você, que sentía dificuldade de dar sua opinião sobre meu livro porque estava perto demais de mim como irmã e "conhecida". Como é a capa? Pelo menos me informe de coisas, já que não posso ver o livro agora: quem faz a capa? Quantos exemplars? [. . .] Quantas paginas tem o livro? (Correspondências 87)

In fact, such references to each other's works pepper the correspondence of the sisters. It is evident from this quote that Clarice is very viscerally experiencing all the fear and excitement over her sister's publication, as if she herself had a novel that was about to be printed. Her questions delve into numerous technical details about the novel which she feels will in part satisfy her longing to read it.

The Clarice that is evident in her personal correspondence with her sisters is not the same as the writer who prepared a public persona for the mainstream public. In the public, Clarice wanted to maintain a figure that fit the hegemonic group's view of a Brazilian writer. Clarice did, in fact, reveal in a number of interviews her origins, birthplace and immigration with her parents, but a number of writers continued to accuse her of hiding her identity,

> But Clarice Lispector is an introverted woman. She doesn't like to talk about herself, and does not comment on her works....Maybe her friends and intimates and the friends of these friends know something about her life. From where she came, where she was born, how old she is, where she lives. But she never speaks about these things 'because it's very personal', and she doesn't like to air her small or large memories. (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, 15-5/61 O Globo 6)

She writes in an ironic entry for *Jornal do Brasil*: "Há coisas que jamais direi: nem em livros e muito menos em jornal. E não direi a ninguém no mundo. Um homem me disse que no Talmude falam de coisas que a gente não pode contar a muitos, há outras a poucos a outras a ninguém" (A descoberta do mundo 529). "Certain things I shall never reveal:

neither in my books nor in my weekly column. Certain things I shall never confide to a living soul. A man once told me that in the Talmud there are things one must reveal to no one" (*Discovering the World* 446). Clarice mentions the Talmud in this quote, but instead of saying that she learned about the Talmud as a child, she distances herself from having a direct experience of Jewish culture, and introduces a medium. In this way, by constantly interjecting an interpreter between herself and aspects of Jewish culture, she shows that while never directly rejecting it outright she instead devalued its importance.

In fact, the throwaway reference to a man who "once told me that in the Talmud" is a typical Clarice understatement, if not outright obfuscation, of her Jewish upbringing. Clarice received a religious education; she went to the Colégio Hebreo-Idisch-Brasileiro and had a religion class that she attended regularly (Moser 65). Tania Lispector suggested that their religious education was started at home by their father, whose own education came mainly from the Bible. "We celebrated three or four dates of the Jewish calendar. My father knew the rituals. He knew Yiddish really well. And received the newspaper, The Day, from New York in Yiddish" (Gotlib qtd. in Waldman 17).

At this school Clarice also studied biblical Hebrew. Ferreira writes:

> Like the majority of Jewish immigrants, Pedro Lispector wanted to give his daughter a religious education. In the Hebrew school, also, one could learn to read the language of one's parents, that until then, she had only heard in the house. When the teacher of religion narrated the history of the prophets in Hebrew, Clarice Lispector submerged herself in the cities and the people of the Biblical world: Jerusalem, Sodom and Gomorrah. (Ferreira 43)

Clarice denied knowing anything of the Talmud, yet her book *A Paixão segundo G.H.*, speaks eloquently about the biblical laws regarding food.

Though she denied her European background, the idea of a homeland was quite important to Clarice. Not only did she repeatedly affirm her *brasilidade*, but it became a point of departure for her in regard to others. In a number of interviews that Clarice

conducted in her second career as a journalist, she interviewed numerous other successful and famous immigrants, and she would almost always come back to the question of their relationship with their adopted homeland. Since a number of Clarice's chosen subjects came from the same background as hers, she might have been noting their success as immigrants in Brazil as a reminder of her own success. In *Discovering the World*, an entry titled 'Solemn Punishment', tells the story of a childhood friend at school who later became a famous mathematician and studied at the Sorbonne. Though she takes pleasure in writing about Leopoldo Nachbin, she does not mention at all that they came from the same background (*Discovering the World* 57-58).

In an interview with Jose Halfin, an Air France executive who was born in Romania, she asks, "A frank response: is Brazil your homeland or your second homeland?" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL04F 1-5.) Questions relating to nationhood and belonging preoccupy Clarice. Yet, in interviewing another Jewish immigrant from Europe, Oscar Ornstein (head of the Hotel Nacional in Rio), she doesn't ask questions about his nationality, but he consistently draws attention to his own feelings and interests as a Jew. A question like "Do you have anything to declare" leads to Ornstein's lengthy discussion about his life in Brazil as an immigrant whose family perished in Auschwitz and who was saved by being allowed to come to Brazil. Like many of Clarice's interviews, this one, as well, leads to a discussion of one's adopted country, "...the congressman Emilio Carlos once said from the tribune of the Chamber, when a colleague called the president of the Bank of Brazil a non-Brazilian, 'There are no Brazilians; what there are, are ones who arrived earlier and those who arrived much later.'" The rest is in the same vein. His responses always draw attention to his Jewish identity. She asks about the important people he has met. He names Ben Gurion. She asks about the important people he wants to meet. He says Saul Bellow. She asks if he's

interested in politics and he answers that Israeli politics interest him and he wishes for peace in the Middle East. None of Ornstein's responses which pinpoint a shared ethnicity elicit further probing questions from Clarice. In fact, it seems as if she wants to move the interview in another direction again to increase the distance between herself and Jewish culture or adherents to it (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL04f 25-28).

She also interviews a famous doctor Abraham Akerman. Again she stays away from questions of nationality, but like all her other Jewish subjects, this one also refers to their shared nationality. Clarice asks him about death; his response is singular,

> My dear father was since his youth a Spinozist. As you must well know, Spinoza was a young philosopher who lived in Amsterdam and was excommunicated by the Synagogue. My philosophy is his. I want, beyond this, to declare that in reality there exist only three oppressed minorities: the black, the Jew and the woman. (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 39-42)

Akerman assumes that she is just as aware of Jewish philosophy as he is; in fact Clarice had been an avid reader of Spinoza. She owned a copy of Spinoza's writings in French, and her first novel, *Perto do coração selvagem*, mentions Spinoza's philosophy on several occasions (Moser 109). Yet, again just as in previous interviews Clarice does not respond to this provocation that would lead her to enter into a discussion of Spinoza, and changes the subject. She turns the conversation to Akerman's love for Brazil. He says "Anyone who does not like Brazil is an ass" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 39-42). Her questions reinforce her preoccupation with an exile that allows one to embrace the new homeland, in her case Brazil. If her interviewees stray from the questions she poses and bring up their shared Jewish identity, she follows up with a question that can only demonstrate that for her the only identity worth mentioning is Brazilian.

In an interview with the artist Carlos Scliar, a close friend of hers, at whose house in Cabo Frio she passed many weekends, again Clarice does not ask anything personal or anything that suggests that they are friends, children of immigrants and of the same background (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 62-64). In case after case of interviews conducted with people from her background Clarice distances herself from her subjects; identity and common ground allow Clarice to invite just these subjects to be interviewed, but during the interview itself she distances herself from questions that might shed more of a light on her ethnicity.

In her interview with a non-Jew, the famous literary critic Leo Gilson Ribeiro brings up Isaac Bashevis Singer, who wrote in Yiddish. Once the subject of Jewish literature is introduced Clarice asks, "You once told me that you had an obsession with Jews. What did you mean to say by this?" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 55-57) Time and time again in these interviews, instead of talking about Jewishness herself, Clarice the journalist serves as an anxious medium for others to speak of Jews and their accomplishments. Ribeiro responds:

> I am obsessed with only a few things, such as: music, literature, philosophy. In terms of admiration, almost without reservations, I have an obsession with the intelligence of the Jews, with the sensibility and contribution that they present to all spheres of human knowledge. Citing: Hannah Arendt, Freud, Marx, Einstein, Martin Buber, Rosa Luxembourg, Isaac Stern, Arthur Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, etc... In literature, you feel the mark of Kafka, Proust, even the Bible...But the fact is that numerically the Jews have a surplus of intelligence maybe--because they are a minority and the goyim, the majority. And after all, Jesus was also a Jew... (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 55-57)

Clarice herself brings up the topic of Ribeiro's admiration for Jewish culture, yet in all her interviews this is possibly the only time that she does this, and in fact she chooses a non-Jew to speak about the accomplishments of Jews. She feels that the subject is safe only when it is interpreted by someone whom the mainstream will consider impartial. At

this point, Clarice changes the topic, pointing out once again that anything too connected to her own background makes her uncomfortable (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04F 55-57).

The question then must not be why Clarice denied being Russian or Ukrainian, as her natural aversion to these countries has already been explained. Rather the question is why so many friends at her funeral were shocked that she was Jewish[8]. She had consciously removed every reference to her parent's religion and culture from her work. References to knowledge of Yiddish as well as intimate details of her relationship with her markedly ethnic family are not to be found in her writings. Another critic writes about Clarice thus, "Clarice Lispector was the first writer in Brazil to understand the vacuity of biographies and to contest in her texts the validity (and the commodity) of a narrative consistent with emancipating the author from her identity and experience…" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 04f 219 Luis Correa de Araujo, 'Moldura e Magica da Palavra').

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

It is important to look at the historical period of the 1930s and 1940s when speaking about Clarice's formative years in order to provide a background for her choices in not thematizing her identity early in her work. It was in the 1930s that a number of published texts in Brazil discussed the Jewish question. A number of international anti-Semitic texts were translated and published in Brazil for the first time. In 1931, *The Secret Forces of Revolution—Masonry and Judaism* (*As Forças Secretas de Revolucão*

[8] "Teve gente que se surpreendeu com essa condição de mulher judia. O Antonio Callado escreveu, logo depois que Clarice morreu, que tinha ficado espantado com o fato de ela ser judia. Como se fosse preciso ela ostentar uma estrela em sua roupa"/"There were people who were surprised with this condition of a Jewish woman. Antonio Callado wrote, soon after Clarice died, that he was shocked that she was Jewish. As if it were necessary to display a star on her clothes." (Borelli qtd. In Lerner 49).

—*Maçonaria e Judaismo*) by Leons de Poncins came out. In 1934, Henry Ford's *The International Jew* (*O Judeu Internacional*) was published, as well as a copy of the famous falsified document, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903) introduced to the Brazilian public by Gustavo Barroso a famous Integralista (a right wing political group that allied itself with fascism) (Carneiro 113). Anti-Semitism in the press appeared mostly in the publications of the Integralistas. They recommended the reading of the *Protocols of Zion*, and *The International Jew* among other formative texts. But by and large there were texts promoted by the Integralistas to the other Integralistas, and not the Brazilian public at large. Such Integralistas as Miguel Reale, Gustavo Barroso and Tenorio d'Albuquerque published works that railed against Jews as Communists and capitalists, but they were aimed at an Integralista[9] audience (Carneiro 351-67). Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* (1930), a novel of struggle in the immigrant population of New York, served to fuel more debates, about the role of the Jew as a socialist and revolutionary. The novel became popular with the Brazilian left Brazil and the writer Moacyr Scliar counts it as one of the formative works of his education and thought.

In 1933, a number of Brazilian intellectuals published a collection of articles on the Jewish question titled *Why Be an Anti-Semite* (*Por que Ser Anti-Semita*?). Possibly this was in reaction to the right-wing Integralistas, who by the 1930s were already printing pamphlets with anti-Semitic texts. The Jewish community responded by printing material against Nazism. A protest held against Nazism and war was attacked by the police in 1933 and the resulting investigation led by Felinto Muller, an ardent Hitlerite, determined that the police legitimately suppressed Communist rabble rousers (Lesser 60-61). While the mainstream press kept quiet about the changing immigration laws and

[9] Though the Integralists were a major political force in national elections during this era, when Plinio Salgado had pamphlets from the Third Reich sent to Brazil, the Vargas government decided not to publish them widely.

their anti-Semitic bent, the Jewish press did not mention the new laws and spoke only about the horrors of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Two mainstream illustrated newspapers published at the time in Rio and São Paulo, *Careta* and *Cultura*, presented different political opinions on the Jewish question. *Careta* printed anti-Semitic caricatures, and in 1936 it featured a cover of a Jew holding weapons and threatening world peace (Carneiro 440.) *Cultura*, on the other hand, was sensitive to the Jewish situation and in 1939 began publishing a series of articles on the situation in Europe (Carneiro 466). Another print publication *O Correio do Povo* in May of 1939 uncovered a band of educated men who trafficked in white women, "In all the journalistic texts the word 'Jew' precedes the names of the guilty, mixing the stigma of the word with the crime practiced by the traffickers" (Carneiro 222). Fascist publications in Brazil, like the integralist paper *Ação*, constantly warned against the dangers that Jews were posing to the Brazilian society. Carneiro writes that the magazine imagined the Jewish hand at work everywhere (414). Carneiro also notes that the newspaper *O Estado De São Paulo* "between 1927 and 1937 maintained a compromising silence about the persecution of the Jews in Germany" (393). Furthermore, some papers like Rio de Janeiro's *Meio Dia* received German backing. One headline used the potency of false statistics to strike fear into the population about the rising number of Jews among them, claiming that 150,000 Jews entered Brazil in a six-month period (Lesser 129).

Jeffrey Lesser, an ethno-historian, writes that in the 1930s a large number of Jews were worried about the worsening situation for Jews not only in Europe but in Brazil as well, "With Jews no longer officially allowed to enter Brazil those immigrants already resident in the country began to fear for their future" (95). Furthermore, in 1938 the Vargas regime passed two laws, one of which was to deport aliens, those who the regime

felt "compromise national security"[10]. The second law did not allow them to participate in any political meetings or associations (Lesser 105). Clarice, who still did not have Brazilian citizenship at this time, was particularly vulnerable to the first law. Because of these laws, Zionism as a movement dedicated to creating a foreign country was also banned. In 1938 new decrees came out that limited the Jewish community already in Brazil, "Foreign-language publications could not be printed without official permission, and foreign-language instruction for children under fourteen years of age was banned" (Lesser 109).

The Brazilian political rhetoric of "whitening" during the same historical period complicates the issue of the country's politics of anti-Semitism, but provides an additional historical force critical to the social cauldron in which Clarice's identity was forged. The sociologist Bernardo Sorj suggests that anti-Semitism did not take root in Brazil because the greater struggle of Brazil's racial theorists was not against a religion but against the native and African influences which they believed needed to be conquered under the theory of 'whitening.'

According to Sorj, though, Jews were considered white and could therefore be used to 'positively' alter the racial aspect of the country:

> The basic explanation for the lack of anti-Semitism in Brazil can be found in the particular ideology of Brazilian 'whitening'. In this ideology, the white was the ideal that needed to be reached, in the form that other races, particularly the black, would have to 'better itself' via miscegenation, until it also reached the same state

[10] Scholars of the World War II period in Brazil present a mixed portrait of the extent to which Brazil functioned on anti-Semitic aims. A number of scholars claim that Jews were not considered racially different from other whites in Brazil, yet there is a field of scholarship countering these claims and citing the use of Nazi rhetoric and eugenics in racial theories espoused by Itamaraty and the Foreign Services. The claims are represented by the critical works touching on anti-Semitism in Brazil, Carneiro's *O Anti Semitismo Na Era Vargas* and Lesser's *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question.* Both address the anti-Semitism in the diplomatic corps as well as the problems that Brazilian-Jewish communities encountered when they tried to bring in their relatives and friends from overseas.

> of whitening. Likewise, to the extent that Jews are accepted as part of the white race -- what was questioned by some Brazilian intellectuals, associated with fascist ideologies in the 20s and 30s – they became a part of the solution and not the problem. While the Brazilian society is racist, anti-black, this racism did not reach other ethnic groups, like the Jews. (Sorj 10)

Yet, Lesser states throughout his work that anti-Semitism did reach the top of the Brazilian government and the elite. He notes that "anti-Semitism was rampant among Brazilian intellectuals and federal policy makers in the 1930s" (21). Although Sorj's claim about the basic lack of institutionalized anti-Semitism might be true for the way that Jews were treated on a daily basis as Brazilian citizens, by the government and their peers, this was not the case in the way the Brazilian government began to see Jewish immigrants, who were looking to come to Brazil after the Brazilian Revolution of 1930 and during Getúlio Vargas's Estado Novo.

There were several instances in which Jews were affected by anti-Semitism or the anti-immigrant fervor present in the country. As of the 1930s, Jews could no longer immigrate freely, and those who had immigrated found it almost impossible to use their European degrees[11].

Lesser points out that anti-Semitic fervor began when Zwi Migdal, a Jewish-owned crime syndicate which operated a prostitution ring which trafficked in European women, was found operating in Brazil. A number of texts printed in the 1920s and 1930s accused Jews of being pimps and referred to them as polacas (Polacks) and cafetões (pimps) (Lesser 35). Yet, their numbers were heavily exaggerated as at most the number of such negative Jewish elements in society never exceeded a thousand (Lesser 33).

[11] Brazilian law did make it difficult for German Jews in the Liberal professions. Those with European professional degrees were not allowed to practice and one immigrant aid group reported that the test to legalize a foreign medical degree was so difficult that 'none except a single dentist is so far known to have passed' (Lesser 79).

In fact, although assimilated Jewish Brazilians did not feel that they were not white, the Getúlio Vargas government was influenced by nationalistic and nativist ideals, and began promoting the immigration of those races it explicitly defined as 'white races':

> Under the angle of the immigration phenomenon, the government of Vargas defined itself by the triumph of the white man, non-Semite/non-Jew. As an expression of this ethnic principle and by the suggestion of Oswaldo Aranha, celebrated the immigration from Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. (Carneiro 212)

Vargas was interested in filling Brazil with desirable Aryans and the rhetoric of the 1930s in the Vargas cabinet as well as in the diplomatic circles became filled with references to eugenics (this was similar to the conversations in the US Congress in the 1920s when new immigration quotas were enacted, as shown in the second chapter). Whereas the Jewish immigrants who were in Brazil, were already in and nothing could be done to them (except for Communists like Olga Benario Prestes) the Brazilian government, led by Vargas and Oswaldo Aranha, began to enact laws that would limit the entrance of indesejável (undesirable) elements into the country. They instituted the requirement of an invitation letter which was to be sent by a Brazilian to the person who was to immigrate (Carneiro 164-66). Their fears were principally centered on Communists who were often Jews; they began to see Jews as hungry for world power and domination and not particularly useful or reliable.

In the mid-1930s, governmental repression in Brazil became more complicated, especially for Communists, Carneiro writes:

> Denunciations, prisons and torture mark the year of 1935 with an 'attempted coup' by the communists and the consequent repression of the Acão Nacional Libertadora-ANL (National Liberating Action), founded in 1934 as a movement of the left with socialist tendencies. The imprisonment and torture of the members of the ANL (Ghioldi, Harry Berger, Allan Barron Miranda, Leon Vallee e Carlos Prestes) gives us an example of the gravity of repression and strengthening of the myth and of the stigma of 'being communist and Jewish'[. . .] (Carneiro 116-17)

In 1937, a member of the Brazilian military, Olympio Murão Filho, masterminded a document which claimed that Brazilian communists were preparing a coup against Vargas's regime; it was called the "Cohen Plan." When the fake plan was discovered it led to a tightening of the government and a more right-wing swing in the Vargas regime (Lesser 96-97).

It is at the same time that people suspected of being Jewish were not allowed to disembark from ocean liners[12]; others to reunite with their families underwent conversion to Christianity in Europe to prove that they were no longer Jewish (Carneiro 170-71). At this time a ship of Jewish farm workers was put into quarantine when it reached Brazil as the dialogue about Jews at the official levels had started to touch on questions of threats to national health and welfare: "Likewise, the question of Jewish immigrants transformed itself, in Brasil of the 30s, into a problem of national security: there emerged political arguments that were mixed with those of racial and religious origin, and even those on the topic of 'public health'" (Carneiro 172).

Sorj argues that this anti-Semitism was never institutional: "Likewise, although there had occurred an eruption of anti-Semitism during the Estado Novo, it never reached major consequences in respect to the modification of socio-cultural standards of Brazilian coexistence" (26-27). Although the attitude towards Jews in Brazil did not change as Sorj

[12] In 1937, scores of Jewish passengers with legal visas were not allowed to disembark from ships that docked in Brazil because of the stringent measures that the director general from the Departamento de Povoamento, Dulphe Pinheiro Machado, took: "Because of the function of this rigorous act, Jews continued to be impeded from disembarking, independently of having an entrance visa" (Carneiro 174). Numbers of people were denied disembarkation in Brazil and the reasons were always the same "for being an Israelite" or "for being a Jew" (Carneiro 181).

maintains, there were individual cases all throughout the country showing that Jews were being unfairly singled out and mistreated[13].

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

Elisa writes that in the late 1930s the family became aware of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies in Germany. She discusses her father's spiritual and emotional crisis as they read and reread the newspapers with terrible news about the worsening situation of European Jewry (*No exilio* 151-52). It is before the war is over that the Lispectors' father dies. Ferreira notes that before his death he was most preoccupied with WWII, the new rules enacted in German-controlled territory which made it difficult for Jews to immigrate as it stripped them of their rights, and Hitler's attacks on Britain and London (72). The three girls were quite aware therefore of the marginalization of European Jewry and of their precarious status while Hitler was in power, even if they may not have been aware of the existence of concentration camps before the end of the war.

Clarice must have been preoccupied with the war and her stateless situation in Brazil, but she rarely wrote or spoke out on the war, and her few words did not at all touch on the personal aspect of the situation, her connection to European Jewry; "Clarice Lispector had expressed her indignation with the war in the article for the faculty magazine in 1941: 'the war, a great crime, is not punished because above one man there are other men, and above those men there is nothing'" (Ferreira 83). Clarice's pacifist words identify World War II from a universalist aspect, as one of many wars, all of which are inhumane and cruel. For her, this war is as impersonal as all other wars. Finally, her

[13] Jewish factory operators were imprisoned in 1935 and a Jewish school in Curitiba was accused of teaching Bolshevism in the classroom. Furthermore, anti-Semitic pamphlets appeared at this time in a number of libraries (Schulman qtd. in Carneiro 260-261).

words might be seen as blaming someone: not any particular enemy like Hitler, Nazism, or fascism, but only a non-existent God.

One of the few other instances when she indirectly refers to World War II and the Holocaust is in an interview given to Edilberto Coutinho, quoted earlier. Clarice was fond of making statements that would confound her listeners, in this vein she said that Germans must have been the true children of God to have done what they did. Without mentioning Jews, she indirectly refers to them both as victims of the Germans and as the supposed children of God, a claim she repudiates by stating flatly that only with the permission of God could the Germans have created the Holocaust. The Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives holds a copy of a letter that her friend Bluma Wainer had written to her mentioning those saved from the Holocaust, "Today is Thanksgiving Day and I beyond not caring in God, do not have anything for which to be thankful for, besides being alive. There is a multitude that would be grateful for not having to be in a concentration camp..." (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, Paris, 28 November, 1946). Neither her printed letters nor her archives hold a copy of her response to Bluma's letter, but it seems obvious that the Holocaust was discussed in Clarice's social circle. Hart's similarly wrote in a 1941 letter to his friend Dore Schary (the president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) "that if the news got any worse he would not be surprised 'to find either you or myself the social director of some cheap concentration camp'" (qtd. in Bach 232). The Holocaust was preeminent on the minds of Jews wherever it was that they were living.

Ferreira notes that Clarice, like other members of her family, suffered acutely the situation in Europe during the war:

> The geographic distance of this somber world inhabited by concentration camps, yellow stars and gas chambers, was not sufficient for the young Clarice Lispector

> to ignore the pain of the barbarously murdered Jews. Twenty years had passed since her parents had left the Ukraine to escape the anti-Semitic fury; other relatives were forced to follow in this path. On turning 21, she found the possibility of renouncing her Russian nationality and embracing definitively her Brazilian nationality, as her parents and her sisters had done. (Ferreira 84)

Ferreira suggests here that Clarice was interested in becoming a Brazilian citizen in order to disassociate from the Soviet Union that was in many ways similar to Nazi Germany. Rather, it seems that Clarice was well aware of the threat that an anti-Semitic Vargas government posed to her and a number of other immigrants. Witness the trial and sentencing of Olga Benario Prestes and Harry Berger, two European Jews, who were sent back to Germany by the Vargas dictatorship, because of their ties to the Partido Comunista do Brasil and their non-Brazilian ethnicity, only to die in concentration camps. It is at this same time, during WWII, that she writes a letter to Getúlio Vargas (president of Brazil at the time) asking him to give her Brazilian citizenship (Ferreira 88-90).

It was in 1942 that Clarice began to focus on her naturalization. Although her family members had long ago gone through the naturalization process, she as the youngest waited until she had turned the eligible age to apply for her papers. Not only did Clarice apply for naturalization, but fearing deportation, she wrote two long, pleading letters to Getúlio Vargas asking him to intercede in granting her citizenship (*Correspondências* 33-37). Prior to marrying Maury Gurgel Valente, who was going to be a diplomat, Clarice needed to have Brazilian citizenship, as diplomats were only allowed to be married to Brazilian citizens. She explains in the letter that she cannot read, speak nor write in Russian; her whole family has been naturalized and she is afraid to be sent back to a country whose language is unknown to her. Again, it is important that Clarice Lispector stresses the linguistic ties that bind her to Brazil, she addresses in her plea to Vargas her attachment to the Portuguese language; the idea of the national

language and literature situates and defines her as a Brazilian writer and makes her case for belonging to Brazil better than any pleading about deportation could:

> Uma russa de 21 anos de idade e que está no Brasil há 21 anos menos alguns meses. Que não conhece uma só palavra de russo mas que pensa, fala, escreve e age em português, fazendo disso sua profissão e nisso pousando todos os projetos do seu future, próximo ou longínquo. Que não tem pai nem mãe – o primeiro, assim como as irmãs da signatária, brasileiro naturalizado – e que por isso não se sente de modo algum presa ao país de onde veio, nem sequer por ouvir relatos sobre ele. Que deseja casar-se com brasileiro e ter filhos brasileiros. Que, se fosse obrigada a voltar à Rússia, lá se sentiria irremediavelmente estrangeira, sem amigos, sem profissão, sem esperanças. (*Correspondências* 33)

> A twenty-one-year-old Russian who is in Brazil for twenty one years minus a few months. Who does not know a single word of Russian but who thinks, speaks, writes, and acts in Portuguese, making of this language her profession, and basing upon it all her plans for her future, near or distant. Who has neither father nor mother-the former, like the sisters of the undersigned, a naturalized Brazilian-and who for that reason feels in no way connected to the country she came from, not even through the stories she has heard about it. Who wishes to marry with a Brazilian and to have Brazilian children. Who, if she were forced to return to Russia, would feel irredeemably foreign there, without a friend, without a profession, without a hope. (*Correspondências*, 33)

She was naturalized in January of 1943; Brazilian citizenship made her independent of her history, her immigrant background, and granted her the confidence she was looking for. In the same year Clarice married her husband Maury Gurgel Valente. In January of 1944, Valente was sent to Belem and in July of 1944 they left for Europe, where Valente was first stationed in Naples.

The celebrated Brazilian Jewish writer Moacyr Scliar conjectures that among other factors Lispector's position as the wife of a diplomat prevented her from writing about her ethnicity,

> Clarice tinha problemas com sua identidade judaica, entre outras razões porque era casada com um diplomata e esta era uma ocupação aristocrática, na qual pegaria muito mal um casamento com uma estrangeira e judia. Ela nunca abordou diretamente o tema em seus livros, apesar de ter me dito uma vez que gostaria de

> tê-lo feito. Mas em A hora da estrela , o judaismo está muito presente, nas entrelinhas. (Scliar)

The Brazilian diplomatic corps was not well disposed towards Jews. In fact, Moser writes that in a corps composed completely of pure Brazilians Clarice was not the only Jewish wife; there were two others. Nevertheless, even such a small number was incredibly high for an institution that was not positively disposed toward Jews. In fact, it is known that Clarice directly dealt with anti-Semitic incidents from members of the diplomatic community. While she did not make her identity overt in her works or make it widely known, she seems to have regularly replied to biting anti-Semitic remarks made in the diplomatic world. Moser writes,

> Eliane Gurgel Valente recalled an embassy function in New York when a diplomat brought up the subject of Jews. 'I can smell them,' he said. Staring him straight in the eye, Clarice replied, 'You must have a terrible cold, then, since you can't smell me and my sister-in-law.'
>
> [. . .] I remember an ambassadress in Washington who ordered around the wives of diplomats serving there. [. . .] I remember one time—sitting on the sofa of my own house—she confided in me in secret that she didn't like a certain kind of person. I was surprised because I was exactly that kind of person. She didn't know. She didn't know me or at least a part of me. (qtd. in Moser 213)

It is therefore important to give a background history of the Brazilian diplomatic corps in order to explicate Clarice Lispector's complicated relationship with her Jewish identity.

Both Lesser and Carneiro have written that anti-Semitism in Brazil existed predominantly in the highest echelons of society, specifically the government and Itamaraty, the Foreign Service of Brazil. The diplomatic circles that Clarice Lispector entered through marriage were rife with anti-Semitism[14], Lesser writes;

[14] Carneiro notes that one of the few Brazilian diplomats who spoke in defense of the Jews was Luis Martins de Souza Dantas. A series of government instructions known as the Secret Circulars were distributed to all diplomats serving in Europe -- these among other things, fostered Anti-Semitic policy -- and in spite of Souza Dantas' example, "On the contrary, the majority of Brazilian diplomats supported the initiative of restriction on Jewish immigration imposed by Itamaraty" (290). "Many diplomats

> Every important diplomat posted in a European country with a large Jewish population commented regularly throughout the 1930s and the 1940s on Jewish immigration. Although--few took humanitarian positions or argued that Jewish refugees could help Brazil develop economically, the overwhelming majority were opposed to the unrestricted entry of Jews. (54)

The record of Brazilian diplomats holding important posts all over Europe shows that the majority were negatively disposed to Jews. The consul general in Warsaw, Edgardo Barbedo, wrote derogatory letters about the Jews accusing them of trying to get documents to come into Brasil: "he accused various Jewish associations and companies, authorized to contract agricultural workers to Brazil, of participating in this arrangement" (Carneiro 306). Among the diplomats and representatives of Brazil who were responsible for the anti-Semitic rhetoric and actions in the diplomatic circles, and who were responsible for the low number of visas given to Jews, were Labienno Salgado dos Santos, the first Secretary of the Brazilian Legation in Bucharest, Sebastião Sampaio, the Consul General in Prague, Mario Moreira da Silva, consul general in Budapest, and Muniz de Aragão, Ambassador to Germany (1935-1938) and later Ambassador to England (1940-1952) who was responsible for the betrayal of Olga Prestes (Carneiro 306-323).

Oswaldo Aranha, right hand man to Vargas, had among his major diplomatic roles a stint as the ambassador to the United States (1934-1938), and his work as a minister of Foreign Relations (1938-1944). Two of his biographers have claimed that Oswaldo Aranha tried to let Jews into the country before and during WWII, but Aranha was a staunch supporter of the Secret Circulars and made it his mission that they were copied and studied by all Brazilian Foreign Service functionaries (261). Yet, Carneiro

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witnessed, from the beginning, the European practice of an anti-Semitic doctrine. Many of them gave testimony which left it clear in the missives sent to the Ministry of Exterior, the persecution of Jews in Germany and Poland in the 30s and 40s. They had direct knowledge of the legal support mounted by the Reich for the application and concretization of the means that proposed the physical elimination of the Jews" (295-96).

also makes it abundantly clear that although Itamaraty, and any diplomat serving in the Foreign Service abroad was well aware of the Vargas regime's stance towards Jewish immigrants, at the same time he never publicly professed the kind of anti-Semitic politics that were evident to those who worked in the foreign service (254).

It was around the same time that the Vargas regime was responsible for two Secret Circulars[15], the 1.127 released on 7 June 1937, which stated that visas to Semites were not to be given out unless they were "married to a Brazilian, have Brazilian children, or have real estate in Brazil" (Lesser 92). In 1937, the Secret Circular was sent off to most of the European embassies requesting that visas be given "with the condition that they not be Israelites" (Rio de Janeiro, 12.11.1937 in DNP, Oficios Emitidos, 1931-1937, AHI qtd. in Carneiro170). Secret Circular 1, 249, issued in 1938, referred to the Jews as Israelites and the visa restrictions were based on the wealth of the person seeking to enter Brazil, "Now Jewish capitalists bearing a minimum of five hundred thousand mil reais (twenty-nine thousand U.S. dollars), technical experts, and scientists might enter Brazil. Brazil also emphasized its desire to accept Jewish artists and intellectuals of international renown" (Lesser 115). This last Circular was cancelled only in February of 1951 (Lesser 171).

Clarice and her husband arrived in Italy on 24 August 1944 (Moser 141), and in various stages were made aware of the laws that their own country applied to the entrance of Jews – from the Secret Circulars all diplomats received -- to the extermination of the European Jewish population in the concentration camps. Although Clarice had an

[15] In Part C of the first Secret Circular we read: '*deny visas*...to all people who are known to be, or by their own declaration (identity paper), or any other mode of secure information are of the *Semitic ethnic origin*. In the case of having only 'suspicions', we recommend that the authorities 'delay the concession of the visa, until by other modes of efficient investigation...' are able to clear up the doubt and arrive at a final decision... (168 Circular Secreta n. 1.127 de 7.6.1937, loc. Cit., qtd. in Carneiro 4)

intimate relationship with the Brazilian diplomatic community, and she was better informed about the situation in Europe than her sister, there are no references to the Final Solution in her work or in letters written from Europe to her sisters, at least those in the public archives and printed.

LEAVING LASAR SEGALL'S BOAT, BUT NOT THE TRIBE, BEHIND

It might be reasonable to note here that although Brazilian Jews were not affected socio-culturally by the anti-Semitic laws directed at new immigrants, nevertheless it could not have gone unnoticed by them that their government was supporting Hitler's policies by denying Jewish immigrants right of entry and placing them into quarantine, among other things. In the period 1938-1940, as Carneiro writes, the immigration policies were based on "ethnicity, religion and economic conditions," the new criteria of the Estado Novo (190.) Carneiro notes, in fact, that the new laws targeting Jewish immigrants were well known by the "industrial and commercial bourgeois that saw in this governmental initiative a 'patriotic work' and a 'responsibility'" (129).

If we accept Sorj's explanation, then we can extrapolate it to Clarice's case and claim that as a privileged 'white' Brazilian woman she felt that the Jews' negative condition was not relevant in Brazil; it just simply did not exist. But how can she have been unaware of what was happening in the Brazilian press and to those who wanted to immigrate to Brazil from the 1930s on? Yet, the privileged white Brazilian woman G.H., from Clarice's *A Paixão segundo G.H.* ultimately can't escape a confrontation with the cockroach in her maid's room. The historical reality which had been ignored in Lispector's personal life seeks an outlet in her fiction.

Carneiro writes that a huge number of anti-Semitic pamphlets were printed in the 1940s, both in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo,

> We believe that others of this generation had been favored by nationalism and by authoritarianism that marked the Estado Novo. Meanwhile, it is necessary to remember that this type of pamphlet or brochure had, in this time, a larger expression than now, owning to the scarcity of the means and communication of the masses which were restricted to the radio and the media. (390)

While Sorj claims that a majority of the Brazilian public was unaware of the anti-Semitism present in their own society[16], in fact, pamphlets, newspapers, and other forms of media very obviously showed the public the direction that their government was taking,

> During the trial of communist leader Luis Carlos Prestes, the press emphasized the Jewish origin of Comintern agent Harry Berger (Ernst Arthur Ewert) and the 'Israelite profile' of Prestes' German-born wife Olga, who subsequently was deported to Nazi Germany by the Brazilian police. (Levine 52)

In 1943, the great Brazilian Jewish modernist painter, Lasar Segall, who immigrated in his twenties to Brazil from Lithuania, had an exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts of Rio de Janeiro. The exhibition was promoted by the Ministry of Education and Segall brought 260 works to be shown at the museum. Yet, the exhibition and Segall's paintings were denounced as 'degenerate' following the maxim set by the Nazis at their exhibition of 'Degenerate Art' in 1937, with important paintings by German expressionists later burned. Carneiro writes "The racist campaign won over the newspapers, having Segall classified as a "'subversive, Jew, and communist'" (Carneiro 429).

[16] Bernardo Sorj does not agree with the position that Lesser takes in his book, and does not mention Carneiro's much earlier treatment of the subject: "In the first place, Lesser does not distinguish sufficiently between the discourse of some components of the Brazilian government and the socio-cultural reality of Brazil" (26.) In fact, what Sorj claims, is supported by both Carneiro's and Lesser's texts: the greater Jewish population of Brazil did not suffer from the anti-Semitism, it was directed at Jews who wanted to escape the Holocaust but were denied visas. While not harmed by these rules themselves, they were at the same time fully aware that their families and the families of many other Jews, who could have been saved, were denied entrance on the basis of their ethnicity.

The arguments presented by Sorj[17], downplaying anti-Semitism in Brazil, and by Lesser and Carneiro, highlighting the anti-Semitism in Brazilian government policy and popular thought, are easily reconciled. For Sorj, the only anti-Semitism present in Brazilian culture was directed at the nascent Communist movement:

> Beyond the communist experience, where the identification with the party demanded a rupture with the other ties of collective loyalty, the assimilation of Jews in Brazil did not imply a struggle of active auto negation. Argentina, on the contrary, presented a very different picture. In this country, the decaying dominant classes, the proto-fascist mobilization of dominant classes, the traditional classes, the integration--the normalization of civic ideology with a strong patriotic component, generated a society totally permeated by anti-Semitism which present the problem of 'double loyalty'. (25-26)

Lesser remarks that while immigrating Jews faced a number of restrictions, this was not the case with those already living in Brazil "The surprise in all this, however, is that real Jews living in Brazil, were they citizens or refugees, faced few daily or structural impediments to achieving either social or economic goals" (Lesser 3). Jews, for the most part, were not denied jobs, training, or education elements which when withheld from a certain group usually define institutional prejudice. In Brazil, Sorj writes about the Jewish immigrant:

> He [the Jew] integrated himself in the national culture, placing himself in the majority, in the middle classes, that identify themselves and valorize the fact of being Brazilian. His rapid absorption in the society had like a counterpoint, the constant erosion of the differentiating frontiers and his own traditions. (20)

[17] Sorj goes on to say that there have always been two different ideologies concerning race in Brazil; the first claims that miscegenation would result in the good of the public as the fusing of different races would bring about a tolerant, accepting culture and a liberal society whereas second claims that each race should have its own place, but discriminates against the black race (11). He also mentions that Brazilian society values its immigrants more than other societies, and that both in terms of culture and religion, the country is not prejudiced against its immigrants: "In this form, the foreigner in Brazil, in his turn symbolizes the danger represented by progress, the new ideas and practices that can help the society realize its destiny in the country of the future" (18). In fact, as Carneiro and a number of other historians writing on immigrants during the Estado Novo make clear, Vargas's regime preferred solely "white" immigrants.

Both arguments reflect the biographies of the Lispector sisters. While Elisa and Clarice assimilated very rapidly, Tania their middle sister was the only one to remain in the fold of the Jewish community, in 1938 she married a fellow Jewish immigrant from the Pale of Settlement, William Kaufmann, a furniture salesman, while she worked in the public service (Moser 84). Elisa studied piano at the Recife Conservatory, obtained a BA degree in sociology at the Escola Normal, became an elementary school teacher, worked for the federal government at the Labor Ministry, and represented women's rights and working conditions at a number of international conferences (Moser 84). Clarice on the other hand went to law school (Faculdade Nacional de Direito da Universidade do Brasil). Becoming the wife of a diplomat, in Brazil as in many other cultures, was considered the epitome of social and intellectual life. The Brazilian diplomatic corps was full of the country's elite, from the famous Brazilian novelist and contemporary of Clarice, João Guimaraes Rosa, to Marcus Vinicius de Moraes, the poet and founder of bossa nova.

The Lispectors assimilated and acculturated fully, becoming a part of the cultural elite, not visibly hindered by their foreign extraction or Jewish roots. Sorj writes about the new immigrant condition in Brazil: "In this form, while the national ideology in Brazil does not problematize 'foreign' roots and accepts the historic continuity, in the rest of Latin America, the affirmation against the foreigner became a part of the definition of national identity" (25). Yet Sorj's argument, while historically valid, can also be judged as overly simplistic when confronted by the length to which Clarice went in making myth of her family's history. In Clarice's case, open acceptance and assimilation of Jews in Brazil is complicated by two important facts: throughout her life Clarice sought to be viewed only as a Brazilian, and many times she changed her date of birth as part of denying her origins. To this day, Brazil calls its naturalized citizens Brazilians, but more often than not if one is born outside of the country, they will be publicly referred to in

terms of their original nationality. For example, although the outside world considers Carmen Miranda a Brazilian, it is common in Brazil to refer to Miranda as being Portuguese; like Clarice, she came to Brazil when she was a child. It seems that Brazil's negative attitude towards the Jews continued well after the war. Lesser writes, "Negative images of Jews did also not disappear after the war. A 1950 survey of two thousand São Paulo university students found that most would not want Jews in "close kinship by marriage" (171).

It is possible that these anti-immigrant or rather anti-Semitic tendencies in Brazil also carried over in respect to other phases of Clarice's life. Raquel de Queiroz, a famous female writer and the first woman to become a member of the Brazilian Academy of Writers, says in Clarice's obituary:

> I believe that Clarice Lispector did not have the means to enter the Brazilian Academy of Letters, because of the simple question of her not being a native Brazilian. But this was a simple particularity, because in her heart she was a great Brazilian. No matter all the other titles, she should have been the first to enter the Academy because she exhibited all the characteristics. ("Clarice Lispector será sepultada", Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, 299)

Clarice claimed herself to have no interest in entering the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and in a number of interviews she strongly affirmed this, though her comments can seem dismissive to the point of masking fear of not being admitted. In an article from Curitiba, "Clarice Lispector stated that she would not nominate herself for the candidacy of an empty spot in the Brazilian Academy of Letters because she did not have a sufficiently gregarious spirit for this" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, 81/CL23f Curitiba, 25 July 1970 #5.732).

While in her public life she fought to be recognized as a native Brazilian, in her private life, Clarice– herself an example of the assimilation available to Brazil's educated Jewish immigrants, tended to associate with many people who came from a background

similar to hers. Her friend Pedro Bloch was born in Zhitomir, a city in the Ukraine; like Clarice he was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Rio de Janeiro. Carlos Scliar's (a cousin of the Brazilian novelist Moacyr Scliar) parents came from Bessarabia, a province of the Ukraine that lies directly south of the province of Podolia where the Lispector family came from.

When Clarice was deciding to publish a novel she called Objeto gritante (whose title she later changed to Agua viva), she went to Bloch's house to discuss this important moment in her life. Her biographer Ferreira writes:

> The encounter was set in the house of [Carlos] Scliar, in Cabo Frio, a place that Clarice Lispector liked immensely. How many times had she taken refuge there, in the house of Pedro and Miriam Bloch, where she enjoyed herself, in the sea. Suddenly, Cabo Frio turned itself into a piece of Russia. Like the parents of Clarice Lispector, those of Pedro Bloch and Carlos Scliar also were Russian of Jewish origin. (259)

According to Ferreira, in this circle of friends Clarice was at home, and Ferreira stresses it was these friends who transformed a part of Brazil into a shtetl, though the meaning of this comment is vague. Did they drink tea and discuss Russian literature and share Jewish jokes, or is it simply that they had a similar way of looking at Brazilian life from their shared Russian-Jewish heritage? Scliar writes how Clarice took part in the protests of the 1960s,

> [. . .] significando, além de sua total solidariedade, também ema espécie de guardiã, com cuidados especiais, buscando com o olhar todos os amigos próximos ou mais afastados. Era mais que uma amiga, me parecia uma mãe judia, protetora, generosa, preocupada. /[she] signified, beyond her total solidarity, also a type of guardianship, with special care, searching with her look for all her friends who were near or more removed. She was more than a friend, she appeared to me a Jewish mother, a protectreress, generous and preoccupied [for the well-being of others]. (Lerner 37)

Scliar himself uses the word solidarity, not only to connote the meaning that the whole world applied to student solidarity protests in the 1960s, but also to tie that definition of

solidarity to Clarice's identity as a 'Jewish mother' a symbolic figure who is intrinsically concerned about all those who make-up her 'family'. In this sense, Scliar corroborates the theory that collaboration and solidarity in Clarice's case constitute her Jewish identity: "I believe simply that recognition is stronger where existence is more confined, more in danger: which explains why solidarity is stronger among Jews than among non-Jews, stronger among the working classes than among the bourgeoisie" (Memmi 282).

Earlier in the biography Ferreira discusses the touching friendship that Clarice had with her friend Bluma,

> Like Clarice Lispector, Bluma Schafer had been raised in the northeast, she had been born in Bahia in a family of Jews. She did not live to complete 40 years before she fell victim to cancer. When Clarice Lispector came back from Torquay, she knew the gravity of Bluma's state, and like a dedicated friend she kept her company until the last days of her life. (172)

While in Europe, Clarice had exchanged many a letter with Bluma, and they were very devoted to each other, visiting each other on several occasions in their respective European cities. Like Clarice, Bluma did not often write about her Jewishness, except for a letter that mentions Holocaust survivors and a letter about a friend, Regina, whose father who was an integralista. "I like her, and if her father isn't careful (he was an integralista, I don't know if he still is, and if he is against the Jews, while not being an anti-Semite -- I find this explanation difficult)...."(Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, letter from Bluma Wainer to Clarice Lispector, Paris 12 April 1937). In another comment about her husband, Bluma writes that, "Sam came back enchanted with the new type of Jew being created in Palestine" (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, letter from Bluma Wainer to Clarice Lispector 26 April 1948). In writing about anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and Israel, Bluma's letters suggest that Clarice might have shown interest

in these subjects, even though these ethnic elements were never overt in her literary output.

Furthermore, Clarice worked with a number of people from the same Russian-Jewish upbringing in the publishing and print media. Already in the 1950s Clarice began to have trouble finding work. Paulo Francis, one of the few who noticed how she was struggling at this time wrote after her death,

> But I ask myself if these obituaries noticed that in 1959 Clarice Lispector did not find an editor in Brazil. She had fame, yes, but in the circle of intellectuals and writers. The editors avoided her like the plague.
>
> [. . .] Nahum Sirotsky, Carlos Scliar, Luiz Lobo and I, resolved in 1959 to ensconce Clarice Lispector in the magazine *Senhor*. The owners of the magazine, Simão e Sergio Waissman, believed in us. She published practically all of her stories in *Senhor*. They were very successful inside the limits of circulation of a magazine that never surpassed 25,000. (Francis)

This fact yet again underscores the Jewish solidarity that Memmi highlights in his seminal text, it is with the help of the greater community that a Jew becomes moored once the majoritarian community casts him off. Her friends arranged for her to write new material for a Jewish-owned publication. Ferreira also notes that the publication *Senhor* was extremely important to Clarice Lispector's survival at this time:

> Before finishing the year 1958, Clarice received a letter from journalist Nahum Sirotsky, inviting her to be a columnist for the magazine Senhor, whose release was anticipated for January. Sirotsky suggested a collaboration; in the form of a monthly letter in which Clarice Lispector could anticipate the artistic and cultural happenings for the subsequent month in New York. (200)

The magazine *Senhor* led to Clarice's fame as a writer of short stories, and provided a platform for subsequent publication.

The most ironic personal detail from Clarice's life, juxtaposing her affiliation with leading Jewish intellectuals and her larger assimilation as a Brazilian, was her dismissal from the *Jornal do Brasil*. In 1973, Clarice lost her job at *Jornal do Brasil*, as did all the

Jews who worked there, including its editor/director Alberto Dines, a famous writer and biographer who later wrote a work about Stefan Zweig. Dines published Clarice's works at *Jornal do Brasil* from 1967 to 1973; in December of 1973, Dines himself was fired. Ferreira writes:

> The directors of the newspaper accused Dines of heading an editorial department without discipline. The truth, on the other hand, was different. As the country was living through a great oil crisis, a result of the Yom Kippur War, the new president of the Republic would be Ernesto Geiso, who had left Petrobras and was a defender of close relations with the Arabs. It was not convenient to maintain at the helm of the newspaper the Jew Alberto Dines...with him were fired some other people, among them Clarice Lispector. During that New Year of 1974 in the house of Dines, Clarice Lispector confessed to him that she was extremely proud of this new 'belonging'. (263)

The Jews of Brazil who thought that they could remain unaffected by the Jewish situation in the world were actually touched by it even thirty years after the end of the Holocaust. Clarice and Dines lost their jobs; after being fired Clarice's financial situation became quite dire and she turned to translations to support herself.

Lesser writes that by the 1970s the Brazilian government returned to using rhetoric that was decidedly anti-Jewish, a fact that reverberates with the events that occurred to Clarice and her Jewish colleagues,

> Brazil's authoritarian regime never provided the expected protection for minority groups, and political violence against dissenters led many Jews to relocate to Israel [. . .] The Brazilian military's foreign policy also made many Jews uncomfortable. In 1975 Brazil voted in favor of the United Nations resolution on equating Zionism with racism, and soon afterward the military decided to base its foreign policy on a 'responsible pragmatism' that included a heavy dose of pro-Arab rhetoric. (Lesser 173)

For the first time in her life, Clarice became affected by anti-Semitism in Brazil that had been so apparent to many of her contemporaries before she personally suffered from it. Ferreira writes:

> For the first time she accepted herself as a Jew. Dines saw the fact of her not advertising her Jewishness not as a fear of being labeled Jewish, but simply because she did not like labels, she wasn't obvious. On another occasion they spoke about Judaism penetrating her work. Clarice Lispector asked if this was very evident. Then Alberto Dines said to her that Kafka also was very Jewish although he did not write obviously Jewish literature. (263)

Ferreira writes that Clarice enjoyed this comparison of Dines's but never wanted to reveal her whole self to the public, which in Ferreira's opinion is possibly why she wasn't interested in using Jewish elements in her texts. At the same time, an absence of almost all signifiers, of almost all markers of "Jewishness" in her texts (in "Onde estivestes da noite" there is one character called "o judeu"), are a sign that she felt such elements to be dangerous to her individuality and to her status in Brazilian society, as a 'pure' Brazilian writer, and not just some immigrant off the boat.

Chapter V: The Novels of Clarice Lispector

"Los poetas no tienen biografía. Su obra es sua biografía." Octavio Paz

Identity projection, the technique of becoming estranged from one's culture and ethnicity while at the same time creating avatars to embody these influences in one's fiction, is critical to Clarice's assimilation and adult life, within Brazilian intellectual and social circles. Identity projection as a literary technique reflects Clarice's decision to exile her historical identity and channel the need for dealing with her family history through her liminal Brazilian literary characters. Exile served as a psychological foundation for Clarice as she created her identity as a Brazilian. Identity projection was a way for the self-exiling non-Jewish Jew to refract core identity issues into created characters.

In this chapter, the theme of identity projection will be analyzed primarily in two of Clarice's novels, *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A hora da estrela*. The section on identity projection will include consideration of Clarice's social commentary, added to the first chapter focus on her family's history, her personal life and the historical context of Brazilian politics, all of which serve as foundations for her literary act of identity projection.

The themes of exile and identity projection will first be linked to critical approaches to language, including Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature, and ideas on language from the work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Clarice's relationship with the Portuguese language runs throughout her personal history and textual decisions, ultimately to her stated intention of identifying herself as the "others" who serve as the protagonists in these works. Additionally, the use of language as a justifiable substitute for identity will be used to explain Clarice's textual choices and will

be juxtaposed with her constant references to her fear that the act of writing is not a legitimate engagement with the world.

A PLACE TO LIVE IN LANGUAGE

Clarice's literary self-fashioning became praxis for the invention of an illusory narrative that supplanted the need for identification. Language and literature became a potent weapon to erase the past and manufacture a new identity based on Brazilian nationalism. Rosana Kohl Bines asks in her study of Samuel Rawet (1929-1984), another famous Brazilian Jewish writer and like Clarice, an immigrant, "What aspects of identity... does one mobilize or hide, when choosing one particular language over the other?" ('Post Shoah Identity Between Languages' 66). Clarice was mobilizing the part of her identity formed in and by Brazil.

It is probable that Clarice did not know that historically Jews in Europe were often accused of not using European languages as their mother tongues. This was tied to their supposed lack of interest in assimilation and acculturation. According to many prominent anti-Semites not speaking European languages as maternal languages was the principal sin of the Jews in rejecting Europe as their homeland. Richard Wagner writes in his essay "Judaism in Music",

> The Jew speaks the language of the nation in whose midst he dwells from generation to generation, but he speaks it always as an alien…In the first place, then, the general circumstance that the Jew talks the modern European language merely as learnt, and not as mother tongues, must necessarily debar him from all capability of therein expressing himself idiomatically, independently, and conformable to his nature in any higher sense. (qtd. in *Jewish Self-Hatred* 209-210)

In his discourse on the non-native ability of Jews to speak European languages, Wagner suggests that Jews should not use these languages. Wagner implies that if they cannot

express their true nature in a certain language, every communication, every act of speaking is an equivocation.

For Clarice, the Portuguese language functioned as the signifier of her Brazilian identity. Clarice was methodical in the invention of her own Brazilianness in association to and as an extension of the Portuguese language. She tirelessly affirmed the sanctity of the language and her attachment to it in interviews and personal writings. She famously wrote, "Esta é uma confissão de amor: amo a língua portuguesa" (A Descoberta do Mundo 134). "This is a confession of love: I love the Portuguese language" (Discovering the World 134). She campaigned for an identity framed solely in terms of her relationship to this language and went so far as to deny the role of any other language to her identity formation; she famously wrote,

> Se eu fosse muda, e também não pudesse escrever, e me perguntassem a que língua eu queria pertencer, eu diria: ingles, que é preciso e belo. Mas como não nasci muda e pude escrever, tornou-se absolutamente claro para mim que eu queria mesma era escrever em português. Eu até queria não ter aprendido outras línguas: só para que a minha abordagem do portugués fosse virgem e límpida. (A descoberta do mundo 135)
>
> If I were mute and unable to write and people were to ask me which language I should like to master, I would say English for its precision and beauty. But since I have not been born mute and I can write, it is absolutely clear to me that what I have really always wanted was to write in Portuguese. I should even have preferred not to have learnt other languages so as to keep my command of Portuguese fresh and pure. (*Discovering the World* 135)

Clarice was a prime example of the non-Jewish Jew, for her attachment to the Portuguese language became a substitute for her ethnic identity. More than just a patriot's adoration of the communicative tool of one's country, the Portuguese language embodied for Clarice the key to her Brazilian identity.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) Deleuze and Guattari posit that the minor literature is created in an author's reinvention of the major language. They list the

ways in which writers from a minority group can claim a language, even though they might not be native to the culture of the language. They tie this idea specifically to Kafka's use of the German language,

> One way is to artificially enrich this German, to swell it up through all the resources of symbolism, of oneirism, of esoteric sense, of a hidden signifier... Kafka will quickly choose the other way, or, rather, he will invent another way. He will opt for the German language of Prague as it is and in its very poverty. (Deleuze and Guattari 19)

Unlike Kafka, Clarice changed the Portuguese language. In fact, although she attempted to use an unadulterated Portuguese in her novels, one that was used by her contemporaries, her works were constantly accused by numerous critics of sounding foreign and alien; the writer Assis Brasil states, "They accuse her of being alienated; a foreign writer, who treats motifs and themes strange to her homeland in a language that is reminiscent of English writers" ("Mundo subjetivo de Clarice Lispector"). In the same article Brasil maintains that Clarice writes as a universal author, but also one who attempts regionalist writing. The poet Lêdo Ivo had this to say about Clarice's prose, "Clarice Lispector was a foreigner….The foreignness of her prose is one of the most overwhelming facts of our literary history, and even of the history of our language" (qtd. in Moser 126). Her contemporaries viewed her as a writer whose literary roots did not arise from the Brazilian soil; she was compared only to other non-Brazilians like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield, among others.

"Lêdo Ivo, remembering Clarice's 'strange voice' and 'guttural diction,' writes, 'Clarice Lispector was a foreigner…. The foreignness of her prose is one of the most overwhelming facts of our literary history, and even of the history of our language'" (qtd. in Moser 126). It is little wonder then that Lispector refused to be viewed through the prism of her background, or any other distinguishing markers. These reviews heightened

Clarice Lispector's need to use the language as a weapon to defend her Brazilian identity. In fact, Gilman expounds on this typical situation for a Jewish writer: "

> The Other cannot ever truly possess "true" language and is so treated. They [Jewish writers] therefore are at pains to constantly stress their ability to understand, to write, on levels more complex, more esoteric, more general, and more true than do those treating them as "inarticulate Jews." (*Jewish Self-Hatred* 15)

Forced by critics to fight a battle for Portuguese linguistic primacy, Clarice Lispector incessantly highlighted the Portuguese language as her first language, though this was not true.

Clarice's family came from the shtetl of Haysyn in Podolia, western Ukraine; the primary language in Jewish shtetls of the Ukraine was always Yiddish. Moser writes that "Clarice Lispector later claimed that he [Pedro Lispector] immediately learned Portuguese. But Elisa wrote that in Maceió he had not yet had time to learn the new language. For his connection to the outside world he relied on the Yiddish newspaper *Der Tog* (*The Day*), which he borrowed from his brother-in-law" (Moser 46). Olga Borelli notes that Clarice often mentioned to her that in their house "desde pequena, falava-se em iidiche (dialeto judaico) e em russo" (Lerner 49). Therefore, Elisa and Clarice had grown up speaking Yiddish at home. Furthermore, Hebrew and Yiddish were among the first languages to be studied by Clarice, at the Colégio Hebreo Idisch-Brasileiro where she went from the age of seven to ten (Moser 65). Clarice Lispector belongs to a long line of authors and second-language speakers whose success as writers lay in the acceptance and expression of the national language as their own.

Yet, Clarice Lispector's 'otherness', was evident to the literary world in which she chose to make her mark not only because she did not write as a 'Brazilian' would according to many critics, but also because of the way she spoke and the foreign

expressions that she would interject into her conversations. While speaking in Portuguese, Clarice's pronunciation would be affected by what her doctors called an 'imprisoned tongue', she would roll her 'r's' instead of cutting them off curtly. Waldman writes that Clarice had first-hand knowledge of Yiddish which would sometimes come out in the phrases which seemed to be translated from the Yiddish straight into Portuguese:

> This silenced (imprisoned?) tongue appears in a hidden form in an indirect reference of the author to her father, in the chronicle "A Person": […] When they praised someone, he would pronounce soberly and calmly: "he was a real character". The designation 'character' as a superlative qualification is a translation directly from the Yiddish: Er'z a mentsh (he's a fine person). (xxv)

Nonetheless, even though Clarice had perfect Portuguese, many in the literary community questioned her origins specifically because of her speech defect:

> Some critics suggest a third language: Lispector's own, marked by a slight foreign accent. Due to a simple speech defect, referred to in Portuguese as lingua presa (imprisoned tongue), Clarice Lispector's speaking sounded with a strong 'r', like the French do. Because of that many people were suspicious as to her Brazilian nationality. (Mendes Nina 18)

The imprisoned tongue is a speech impediment known in Russian by the verb 'kartavit'[18]: it implies a faulty pronunciation of the 'r', when the 'r' rolls instead of ending curtly. Clarice says, "Many people think that I speak with this accent because I am Russian from birth, but actually I have an imprisoned tongue. There is the possibility of cutting it, but my doctor says that it hurts a lot. There is a word that I cannot pronounce; if I do everyone will laugh too much: aurora" ("Morte de Clarice Lispector").

[18] In Russia people who *kartavili* were often forced to take classes to get rid of the speech defect which, especially for Jewish children, was a source of derision and anti-Semitic baiting from peers. Lenin had the same speech impediment which was the origin of speculation in Russia that he had Jewish ancestry.

In fact, Clarice might not have had a speech impediment as she claimed. Speech pathologist and professor Diana Sidtis writes,

> Producing a sound that is natural in the native language, when one is speaking a second language, is not a speech impediment but a foreign accent. R appears in many different forms even within one national language. Parisian French does not have a rolled r, but a velar r. Some French dialects may have a lingually rolled r, such as Canadian French. German has both lingually rolled and velar r, depending on the dialect area. The educated dialect (stage German) features a rolled uvular r. Yiddish is indeed a dialect of German, and may also have more than one variant of r, depending on geographic background. ("Re: Accents")

Yet her Clarice's purpose in claiming a speech impediment was to obscure the fact that the language spoken in her home when she was a child was Yiddish and not Portuguese, for fear that it would make her Jewish extraction obvious[19]. Portuguese was a universal language, and therefore the best language to represent her as a universal writer and not as a provincial writer marked by belonging to a marginal (in Brazil) religion, ethnicity, and culture. In social settings as in works of fiction, accents and speech defects act as signs that betray Jews as different from the mainstream. In several works of fiction by Jewish authors, including Philip Roth's novel *American Pastoral* (1997), the speech impediment is used as a technique to portray a personage as an anachronism in the mainstream culture. Here it is Swede Levov's daughter Merry who stutters and who betrays her middle-class American background by becoming a revolutionary and a prophet.

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[19] Clarice Lispector writes her own explanation of her speech impediment in her chronicles for the *Jornal do Brasil*: Quanto a meus *r* enrolados, estilo francês, quando falo, e que me dão um ar de estrangeira, trata-se apenas de um defeito de dicção: simplesmente não consigo falar de outro jeito. Defeito esse que meu amigo Dr. Pedro Bloch disse ser facílimo de corrigir e que ele faria isso para mim. Mas sou preguiçosa, sei de antemão que não faria os exercícios em casa. E além do mais meus *r* não me fazem mal algum. Outro mistério, portanto, elucidado." (*A Descoberta do mundo* 499). "As for the way in which I roll my r's, as if I were speaking French or some other foreign language, this is simply because of a speech defect. A defect which I have never succeeded in correcting. A defect which my good friend Dr. Pedro Bloch tells me can be overcome. He has offered to help me but I am lazy and I know perfectly well I would never do the exercises once I was on my own. And besides my rolled r's are not doing anyone any harm. So that should clear up yet another mystery." (*Discovering the World* 418)

Early in her life Clarice began to deny that she had been born outside of Brazil. Ferreira writes in her biography of Clarice that already as a public school student she sublimated her Ukrainian birth and would claim on several school documents that she had been born in the state of Pernambuco (66). She writes: "Clarice Lispector could not wait for the hour to attain adulthood, to become a Brazilian citizen, judging by her school documents, in which she declared herself Pernambucan and not Russian" (68).

Adorno writes in his Minima Moralia, "In his text the writer sets up house... For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live. In it he inevitably produces, as his family once did, refuse and lumber" (Adorno 87). In fact, the Portuguese language becomes a tool of self-construction. As in the very potent myth of the Golem, which must be awakened through language to save the Jewish people, Clarice uses language to manufacture an identity which will serve to defend her from outside forces. In *A hora da estrela*, Rodrigo S.M., the narrator of the novel, speaks about the protagonist Macabéa's lack of community and identification precisely because she cannot articulate herself, cannot speak: "Are there thousands of others like her? Yes, thousands of others who are mere accidents of nature. And if one of thinks about it carefully, aren't we all mere accidents of nature? I have only escaped from a similar fate because I am a writer" (36). This is Clarice's avatar, a male writer, who can escape Macabéa's fate through his identity as a narrator who controls his own destiny. For both Macabéa and Clarice, salvation from being merely accidents of nature can come only through their literary identities, which are closely associated with the business of writing and therefore of naming, of calling forth the world through words.

Naming is extremely important to Clarice Lispector. Moser says that Lispector was attracted to names and naming as an outgrowth of her own biographical history. He notes her first name was Chaya, the Hebrew name for 'life', but in Brazil she was

renamed Clarice (33). The question of names and identity through naming, a very Biblical concern, reverberates through her works.

In *A hora da estrela*, a number of passages speak to the importance of names and naming, Macabéa says:

> Eu também acho esquisito mas minha mãe botou ele por promessa a Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte se eu vingasse, até um ano de idade eu não era chamada porque não tinha nome, eu preferia continuar a nunca ser chamada em vez de ter um nome que ninguém tem mas parece que deu certo – parou um instante retomando o fôlego perdido e acrescentou desanimada e com pudor – pois como o senhor vê eu vinguei… pois é… (*A hora da estrela* 54)

> I agree but it's the name my mother gave me because of a vow she made to Our Lady of Sorrows if I should survive. For the first year of my life, I wasn't called anything because I didn't have a name. I'd have preferred to go on being called nothing instead of having a name that nobody has ever heard of, yet it seems to suit me—she paused for a moment to catch her breath before adding shyly and a little downhearted—for as you can see, I'm still here…so that's that. (*The Hour of the Star* 43)

This process of naming, identifying, and understanding is very intimately intertwined. Macabéa, like Clarice, inhabits for a time a place where she is nameless: Macabéa because she lacks a name for the first year of her life, and Clarice because her given name is later taken from her, in a way erasing almost two years of her life. Essentially a process that most immigrants take for granted—the 'Englishization' or the 'Portuguesation' of their given name into a name 'accepted' by the hegemonic culture—becomes for Clarice a process which reflects her memories of her origins and one which is therefore refracted in her literary works. In another passage the theme of names and naming continues as Macabéa tries to make sense of the world: she asks her new boyfriend to explain his name to her: "Eu não entendo o seu nome—disse ela. Olímpico?" (*A hora da estrela* 55) "'I don't understand your name'—she said." When he refuses to tell her his name she says, "Não faz mal, não faz mal, não faz mal… a gente não precisa entender o nome" (*A*

hora da estrela 55) "That's all right, that's all right, that's all right…people don't have to understand what names mean" (*A hora da estrela* 44). The protagonist suffers in order to arrive at the meaning of the name of a close one. A similar process is evident in Clarice's autobiographical writings; letters to her sisters show that their original Hebrew names remained in use between the three sisters. In letters Clarice often addressed Elisa not as Elisa but as Leinha, a diminutive of the latter's Hebrew name Lea; in a letter sent from Rome she writes: "Minha Leinha, você veio me revelar uma coisa quando se queixou de receber presentes meus." "My Leinha, you revealed something to me when you complained of receiving my presents." (*Minhas Queridas* 49).

In Clarice's work, the ability to enunciate clearly and to make oneself intelligible takes on a greater significance once the reader becomes aware that she struggled her whole life to prove to those around her that her Portuguese was both native and fluent. From Macabéa's lack of enunciation to Janair's silence and other domestic servants' inability to "speak well" we can trace a constant preoccupation with language and its performance. Deborah Archer notes that the author in both *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A hora da estrela* is intimately intertwined and involved with her subjects,

> The effect is a symbiotic relationship between the novel's form and content, as well as a correspondence between author, narrator and protagonist: Rodrigo's (Lispector's) struggle with language reflects Macabéa's struggle as an illiterate; Rodrigo's (Lispector's) fear and indecision about writing Macabéa's existence reflects Macabéa's own aimless, dire existence. (258)

Clarice's entirely self-conceived identity was determined by her relationship to the national language (her ability to function in this language and to voice herself). It is obvious then that the preoccupation with language, which manifests itself so evidently in interviews with her, is also found in her fiction.

Clarice's preoccupation with language and the ownership of language and identity extends into her later works. Through the creation of a narrator, Rodrigo S.M. in *A hora da estrela*, who claims he is the author of the book, thereby removing the text twice from the author herself, Clarice exhibits her preoccupation with the ownership of text, story and language. The play between diegesis and mimesis, and the multiple-framing of the work take away from the authority of Clarice as author, and allow her to question her own power over the text, concerns that are similar to her own concerns about her relationship to the Portuguese language.

In *A hora da estrela*, Clarice elaborates on her family's humble beginnings in a Northeastern Brazilian state (Pernambuco) and her own complexes in relation to the Portuguese language by creating a stand-in in the character of Macabéa. The angst with which several of her characters are fraught in relation to language implicates her own struggles and fears. Rodrigo S.M. says about Macabéa:

> Ela que deveria ter ficado no sertão de Alagoas com vestido de chita e sem nenhuma datilografia, já que escrevia tão mal, só tinha, até o terceiro ano primário. Por ser ignorante era obrigada na datilografia a copier lentamente letra por letra—a tia é que lhe dera um curso ralo de como bater á máquina. E a moça ganhara uma dignidade: era enfim datilógrafa. Embora, ao que parece, não aprovasse na linguagem duas consoantes juntas e copiava letra linda e redonda do amado chefe a palavra 'designar' de modo como em língua flada diria: 'desiguinar'. (*A hora da estrela* 19-20)

> A girl who should have stayed in the backwoods of Alagoas wearing a cotton dress and avoiding the typewriter, for she was barely literate and had only received three years of primary schooling. She was so backward that when she typed she was obliged to copy out every word slowly, letter by letter. Her aunt had given her a crash course in typing. As a result, the girl had acquired some dignity: she was a typist at last, even though she appeared to have some difficulty in stringing two consonants together. When she copied out the attractive, rotund handwriting of the boss, whom she idolized, the word 'designate' became 'desiginate', for that is how she herself would have pronounced it. (*The Hour of the Star* 15)

The character of Macabéa, who is from the Northeast of Brazil, and who, while a native Portuguese speaker, is almost an illiterate and unable to vocalize, speaks to Clarice's own biography, where growing up as a little girl, and as a child of immigrants she had to overcome a rearing in a household where Portuguese was not the native language and to fashion a fluency while everyone around her spoke in an accented not-native Portuguese.

Agua viva, is Clarice Lispector's most introspective novel, one whose many self-searching comments seem to be completely autobiographical. The author's own search for a voice, expression, and a way to make oneself heard in *Agua viva* reflects her goals for the character of Macabéa in *A hora da estrela*,

> But now the time has come to stop painting in order for me to remake, myself, I remake myself in these lines. I have a voice. Just as when I threw myself into the outline of my sketch, this is an exercise in life without planning. The world has no visible order and I have only the order of my breathing. I let myself happen. (*The Stream of Life* 16)

Later she continues on a similar theme, noting that without a voice one does not exist; one's identity is immaterial. If we apply these ideas that Clarice is professing -of the power of the will, the need for a voice, the possibility to invent oneself and by extension one's identity—to *A hora da estrela* and the case of Macabéa, we find that Rodrigo has to kill off his own character, because she is voiceless.

Further in Agua viva, Clarice circles back to the question of speaking, being heard, and creating an identity for oneself. She writes:

> I know that I'm afraid of the moments when I don't use thought and it's a momentary state, difficult to reach that, all secret, no longer uses the words with which thoughts are formed. Is not using words to lose one's identity? Is it to become lost in the essential, destructive shadows? (*The Stream of Life* 58).

When Clarice asks if the inability to use language is related to the loss of identity she links her novel with her angst about her identity as a naturalized Brazilian for whom

using an unaccented Portuguese meant the difference between being identified as a Brazilian versus a naturalized foreigner.

In *Agua viva*, Clarice connects the idea of life without words to life without an identity. Applying this definition to *A hora da estrela* we see that Macabéa is without an identity only because she cannot be defined by her voice as she never has anything to say. A dialogue between Macabéa and her boyfriend Olímpico can hardly be called a dialogue, as neither of them has anything to talk about; the reader is made aware of the young woman's lack of a basic understanding of the world. "He—You talk a load of rubbish. Try to talk about something…anything. She—I don't know what to talk about. He –You don't know what? She –Eh?" (*The Hour of the Star* 48). She is devoid of knowledge, and without the commodity of knowledge or education the narrator, Rodrigo S.M., as well as the other characters, such as her lover Olímpico and her friend Gloria find her to be expendable. In fact, she is interested in uncovering the meaning of various words, and is curious to understand and experience the world. She asks Olímpico to explain and define words like "algebra," "culture," "electronic, income per head," and "count." She doesn't know that there are other languages outside of Portuguese, which she calls Brazilian (*The Hour of the Star* 49-50). And yet it is exactly this love of language combined with an inability to manipulate it which results in her death; after visiting a fortune teller "Macabéa became a little bewildered, without knowing if she should cross the street because her life had already changed. And changed because of words—since Moses's time everyone knows that the word is divine" (The Hour of the Star 95). So affected is she by the words of the fortune teller that she pays not the least attention to a luxury car, driven by a member of the upper class, which subsequently runs her over.

"It was so difficult to think. She didn't know how one set about thinking. Olímpico, on the other hand, was able to think and use fine words" (*The Hour of the Star* 54). At the same time, Olímpico's language skills are used only for consumerist means. He is interested in making a lot of money, in being successful. Through this character who abuses the voiceless and powerless Macabéa, Clarice implicates herself and her class in capitalist ideology, where language, words and the speaking voice are used only in order to subjugate and manipulate others. Yet, in projecting her hidden girlhood onto the character of Macabéa, Clarice also lays out the recurrent strain of subconscious ambivalence about using her literary talent to create a character representing the Brazilian underclass.

The theme of language as identity reverberates through Clarice's fiction and non-fiction, therefore creating a symbolic autobiography of ideas which held the utmost importance to her. The same theme and questions about language, voice and identity ring through *A hora da estrela*, Rodrigo S.M. states:

> First of all, I must make it clear that this girl does not know herself apart from the fact that she goes on living aimlessly. Were she foolish enough to ask herself 'Who am I?' she would fall flat on her face. For the question 'Who am I?' creates a need. And how does one satisfy that need? To probe oneself is to recognize that one is incomplete. (*The Hour of the Star* 15-16)

> Only once did she ask herself that traumatic question: Who am I? The question frightened her to such an extent that her mind became paralyzed. (*The Hour of the Star* 32)

One may ask, why is Clarice Lispector repeating herself, but the supposition is that she is writing the questions that pertain to her own self, and which define her. It is identity projection, and yet, ambivalence about the merit of such a literary trick, inherent in the creation of Macabéa and the questions which the third-person narrator places within the girl's mind.

MY PATH IS OTHERS: IDENTITY PROJECTION IN LISPECTOR'S NOVELS

"Je est un autre" (Rimbaud).

Clarice's thoughts on freedom and voicelessness help provide a context for her protagonists. At the primary level of her family history, the historical fate that determined her family's suffering and exile is at odds with Clarice's belief that humankind can control its own destiny. In fact, Elisa writes in *No exilio* that the youngest daughter could not forgive herself for having been the cause of her mother's illness and disability. Clarice writes, "Don't you see that this is like a child being born? It hurts. Pain is exacerbated life. The process hurts. Coming into –being is a slow, slow pain. It's a full stretching to the point where the person can stretch no more" (*The Stream of Life* 51). The theory proposed by Moser corroborates Elisa's story, that Clarice was conceived and born specifically to cure her mother's illness and failed in that one goal. Either way, the arguments about Clarice's responsibility for her mother's death put forward by Elisa and Moser result in the same curious piece of psychological baggage for Clarice. Ultimately, the schism between personal responsibility and helping the less fortunate in society is at the heart of the division of hegemonic narrative voice and silent or illiterate protagonist from the underclass in *A paixão segundo G.H.* and *A hora da estrela*. Her identity both as a Jew whose family escaped from an impoverished, pogrom-stricken Ukraine, and as a child who grew up in the poor Brazilian northeast is refracted onto these characters. If Lispector could never wholly escape the tag of being a minority writing in a major language, the links between her personal history, social vision and literary choices ultimately reflect the limits, or lack of resolution, available through the method of identity projection.

Yet, while many times Clarice's own words are about the literal pain of being born, on another level they also speak not only to the Lispector family history but the broader historical Jewish past. About *Agua viva*, Cixous writes

> What this text –as well as all of Clarice Lispector's other texts—gives to read is the height of solitude. Solitude cannot be filled; it is pain itself. Clarice Lispector says this constantly the only thing that the reader can remark with a supplementary trait—because Clarice Lispector says everything—is perhaps the origin of this sorrow: "Mine is a new era, and it ushers me to the present! Do I have the courage? For the time being I do: because I come from long suffering, I come from the hell of love, but now I'm free of you." (qtd. in Cixous 33)

Through Clarice's words we can also see a repetitive quest to highlight her background by referring to it covertly. How else can one speak about one's heritage, especially if it is traumatic like the Jewish people's collective suffering, if not by stating explicitly that she descends from 'long suffering'? Cixous explains that intimate details of Clarice's autobiography constantly appear in her fiction; she highlights specifically Clarice's relationship to her parents and the problems of her childhood which made life difficult for her and turned her to writing,

> When Clarice Lispector is read from the beginning, from Coracão salvagem, one notices everywhere the presence of the father and the absence of the mother. The question of birth is an intensification, a metaphorization of a situation that is read as painful. It is determining for her and recurs as one of the themes of her writing. (Cixous 40-41)

In fact, Cixous, who also came from a Jewish background, found in Clarice a distorted mirror of her own background. Cixous's father had died when she was little and she was raised by her mother, the opposite of Clarice's story. Furthermore, because she was an Algerian Jew who could not go back to Algiers and who spent most of her life in France, she felt an affinity for Clarice because of her Jewish background, which forced both of them into a constant position of alterity in all the physical spaces that they inhabited. So while the above quote certainly refers to the pain of being born into a traumatic family

atmosphere, it also refers to the pain of being born into an identity that is hard to manipulate.

The injustices that Clarice allegedly suffered as a result of her ethnic Jewishness – exclusion from the Brazilian Academy of Letters and dismissal from the *Jornal do Brasil* -- did not result in her writing about the injustices that specifically affected the European Jewish population or about the everyday lives of Brazil's Jews. Though Clarice was married to a diplomat posted in Europe during a period of Brazilian anti-Semitic policy linked to the World War II era, she never dealt directly with the implications of the plight of European Jewry.

Gilman suggests that writers often form their works out of an identification with a group. "One aspect of the fictive personality may well be the destructive (or idealized) image of a general social category to which an individual believes him or herself to belong" (*Inscribing the Other* 173). He goes on to say that a number of Jewish writers projected their identity onto other groups,

> Thus one measure of Jewish identity in Western culture can be the rate of internalization (and projection) of anti-Semitic images of the Jew, if such images have a high enough salience to become part of an individual's definition of his or her fictive self. The complex case of the fin-de siècle Viennese cultural critic and writer Karl Kraus is an excellent example of the means by which individuals labeled as Jews internalized and projected the qualities of differences attributed to themselves onto other subgroups. (*Inscribing the Other* 173)

Clarice's work in her two major novels (*A paixão segundo G.H*. and *A hora da estrela*) exemplifies this writer's projected defense of her own ethnicity and an internalized awareness of the difference between white, middle-class Brazilians and Afro-Brazilians or poor white Brazilians. Instead of defending Jews, this writer internalized the problems of the Jews and, forgoing any type of definitive autobiographical writing, began to manifest her relationship to her own people onto a

projected relationship with Afro-Brazilians, and impoverished northerners. Gilman writes,

> For it is the experience of being labeled as different within the public sphere that confronts the individual with the image of him- herself as the Other. And it is this sense of difference that such a writer may project onto other writers, writers labeled as 'different' as the means of assuaging his or her sense of alienation. (*Inscribing the Other* 176)

Clarice's literary output is not a work of "Jewish self hate," although her textual displacement of Jewish identity might suggest this. Because of her complexes in regard to her identity she saw the Jewish struggle in terms of a universal struggle for justice. In her writings, we can see that social injustice was a matter of concern for her. In a chronicle titled 'Sensibilidade Inteligente' Clarice writes about her longing to champion a cause: working for the benefit of others:

> A name for what I am, matters very little. What matters is what I would have liked to be. What I would have liked to be was a fighter. I want to say, a person who fights for the good of others. This I wanted since I was little, because it was the destiny taking me to write what I had already written, instead of also developing in me a quality of the fight that I had. When I was little, my family, jokingly, called me the 'protector of animals; because it was enough for a person to be accused of something for me to immediately defend him. And I felt the social drama with such intensity that lived in a heart perplexed in front of great injustices that are submitted to those who are called the less privileged classes. In Recife, I went on Sundays to visit the house of our house servant in a village. And what I saw made me promise that I would not let that continue. I wanted to act. In Recife, where I lived until twelve years of age, there were, many times, on the street an agglomeration of people in front of whom I argued arduously about the social tragedy. I remember how I pulsated and how I promised myself that one day this would be my task: to defend the rights of others.
>
> Meanwhile, what did I end up being, and so early? I ended up being a person who looks for the profound, who feels and uses words that express it. It is little, it's very little. (Fundação Casa de Ruia Barbosa Archives, CL 70 pi)

Clarice's elucidation of her interests as a child explains why she enrolled at the law school; she was interested in defending the rights of others. This passage also

explains why she did not expose the injustices of the world in her writings in any overt manner, as she was opposed to idle talk, and evinced the questionable belief that literature is not a tool that can be used to influence the world as much as other types of fighting. She writes,

> Meu filho então disse: "Porque você não escreve sobre Vietcong?" Senti-me pequena e humilde, pensei: que é que uma mulher fraca como eu pode falar sobre tantas mortes sem sequer glória, guerras que cortam da vida pessoas em plena juventude, sem falar nos massacres, em nome de quê, afinal? (*A descoberta do mundo* 436)
>
> My little son then asked me: 'Why don't you write about Vietnam?' I felt very small and humble and thought to myself: What can a feeble woman like me say about so many deaths bereft of any glory, about wars in which young soldiers lose their lives, not to mention the endless massacre, and to achieve what in the end? (*Discovering the World* 370).

In a chronicle titled "A Conference in Texas" she writes, "It is not by chance that I understand those who are trying to find their path in life. How I struggled to find mine! . . . But one thing is certain: I am not my path. My path is someone else, my path is others. When I can fully sense another's presence, I will be safe and think to myself: here is my port of call"[20] (*Discovering the World* 158). Here Clarice is not discussing the authorial mandate of presenting the lives of others with the authority of a god; rather she speaks about her role in life as a person who closely feels and reacts to the experiences of others. This extension of her own self to others then trickles down to Lispector's view of her own writing and her subjects; rather than have her works act as a reflection her own life, worries and family history, she makes a concerted effort to display in her writing the pain and experiences of others. References to other people are made often and over the span of many years. In 1971, Clarice writes,

[20] The Brazilian version of this book of essays *A descoberta do mundo*, does not have the following passage, the previous paragraphs to this passage are found on page 165 of *A descoberta do mundo*, but this passage is missing.

> Eu antes tinha querido ser os outros para conhecer o que não era eu. Entendi então que eu já tinha sido os outros e isso era fácil. Minha experiência maio seria ser o âmago dos outros: e o âmago dos outros era eu. (*A descoberta do mundo* 604)
>
> I should have liked to be other people first in order to know what I was not. Then I realized that I had already been those others and found it easy. My greatest experience would have been to be the essence of others; and I was the essence of others" (*Discovering the World* 508).

The 'presence' of others makes her whole. Similarly, this gets back to Memmi's thesis that an active participation with others defines the Jewish constitution.

In *Agua viva*, Clarice makes clear the ambivalence of wanting to be free of any and all markers tying her to a tribe or an ethnicity, while at the same time attempting to work for the good of others. Her ideal is the possibility of detachment and involvement at the same time. She writes about identity and its signifiers,

> Each one of us is a symbol dealing with symbols—everything is a point of mere reference to the real. We seek desperately to find a proper identity and the identity of the real. And if we understand each other through the symbol, it's because we have the same symbols and the same experience of the thing itself: but reality has no synonyms. (*The Stream of Life* 66)

For Clarice laments that people can only relate to each other through symbols acquired from the world and meant to represent identity, ethnicity, tribe, and language. To her these are all symbols attempting to define the self, but she persistently asks if the self and reality can be defined by these signifiers, and concludes that individuals cannot be defined by the group to which they belong. This is why her characters do not belong to this world of symbols and can be 'everyman'.

Later, as an adult, her response to religion was unclear to her biographers, although it is obvious that she believed in an innate spirituality and morality not tied to the orthodoxy of any religion. Among her works there is a poem in the form of a number of questions which relate back to her Jewishness:

> Why do I write?/ Why did Christ die on the cross?/...Why does the black race exist?/Why am I not black?/ Why does a man kill another?/Why in this moment is a baby being born?/ Why is the Jewish race elect?/ Why was Christ a Jew?/ Why is my last name as hard as a diamond? Why is today Saturday? (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 72pi)

Many of her existential questions are questions about identity. She specifically picks out another long-suffering group, Afro-Brazilians, and ties their identity to the identity of Christ who also belonged to an ethnic group that has suffered. This should be cross-referenced to the similar questions posed by Aksyonov's fictional stand-in Tolya von Steinbock in *The Burn*. Tolya, whose mother is Jewish but has converted to Catholicism, wonders about the identity of Christ,

> …Кто его распял!? Почему он Сын Божий? Как он воскрес ? Почему к нему обращаются униженные люди? Кто я и к кому мне обращаться? Откуда я пришел в этот мир и куда я уйду?
>
> …Who crucified him!? Why is he God's Son? How was he resurrected? Why do the humiliated turn to him? Who am I and whom shall I turn to? Where did I come from and where will I go? (*The Burn* 208).

Across continents Jewish writers who have removed themselves from their ethnicity find themselves entering a dialogue with each other, in Aksyonov's case he asks about the humiliated, who turn to Christ, he is speaking of course about the GULAG prisoners among whom he finds himself while he lives with his mother in Magadan. While Lispector is concerned about all the injustice in the world, the line about the black race is tied to the similar injustices suffered by the Jews. She is preoccupied with the contention that Jews are a chosen people; in fact, in a passage cited earlier she uses the line again in her only known comment about the Holocaust, "But I don't believe this nonsense about the Jews being God's chosen people. That's ridiculous. The Germans ought to be because they did what they did. How did being chosen ever help the Jews?" (Coutinho qtd. in Moser 108).

Clarice focuses to a great extent in her chronicles on the idea of justice that she would like to bring into her own work,

> Ever since I've known myself the social fact had for me a bigger importance than any other: in Recife the 'mocambos' were the first truth for me. Before I had a feeling for 'art', I felt the terribly profound beauty of the fight.
>
> [. . .]I wanted to 'do' something against social injustice (as if writing were not the same as doing). But what I cannot accomplish is to use writing for this, moreover this inability hurts and humbles me. (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 51pi)

Yet the patterns of discourse about people in menial positions versus the character voicing the text in Clarice's novels, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, *A hora da estrela*, and *Agua viva*, reveal that she did bring aspects of the liminal into her work. As she crafted the hegemonic eye in her work (looking at the lower classes through the prism of a white male or female narrator from the upper classes), she was at the same time fully aware of the other side through her own experience as a child from a working-class, immigrant family. The reality of her upbringing and background meant she could never fully embrace the hegemonic presence and therefore represents the duality of the minority who assumes a dominant position.

> The problem of justice is in me such an obvious and basic sentiment, that I cannot be surprised by it, and without being surprised I cannot write about it.
>
> And also, because, for me, to write is to search. The sentiment of justice never was searched for by me, and was never discovered, what surprises me is that it is not equally obvious to all. I have the consciousness of simplifying, primarily, the problem.
>
> But because of a tolerance with myself, I am not shaming myself, totally, for not contributing to a social cause from my sphere of writing. It is not a matter of wanting, the question of not 'doing', of not contributing, with actions...This has shamed me forever. And I do not even try to repent: it is not that I don't want to, by indirect or tortuous tactics, receive from myself my absolution. In this I want to continue being shamed. But, to write what I write; I am not shamed, I feel that

> if I were to be ashamed it would be a sin of pride. (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, CL 51pi)

In *Agua viva* the narrator questions the inaction of each and every one of us in the face of all the misery of the world, "But there are those who are dying of hunger and all I can do is be born. My long, monotonous narrative is what can I do for them? My answer is: paint a fresco in adagio. I could suffer the hunger of others in silence, but a contralto voice makes me sing—a dusky, black song" (33). Here Clarice's narrator presents a different view from that in some of the author's own interviews, where she explains that writing about injustice is not as valuable as direct action. In fact here the narrator states that she cannot keep silent, and the story that she will spin or the song she will sing will reflect the people whom she is writing about the, 'dusky, black song.' She writes:

> The terrible duty is that of going all the way to the end. And without relying on anyone. To live oneself. And in order to suffer less, grow a little dull. Because I can't bear any longer the pain of the world. What's there to do when I feel totally what other people are and feel? I live them, but I have no strength beyond that. (*The Stream of Life* 42)

Very often one can see Clarice's preoccupation with the burden of life: how difficult it is just to live one's own life especially when one has to worry about the problems of others. At the same time there is the conflict within her of living for others and living without burdening oneself with the problems of the world: they are too heavy for her to carry. Again she shows her readers how sensitive she is to the pain of others, but she distances herself from it by not taking action. Yet, how can a scholar of Clarice's work discern the difference between her avowal to live for the good of others, her love of writing, and at the same time her insistence on the belief that writing is inaction, that in the end writing does not heal or save anyone? After all she famously maintained that she was created for three things:

> Há três coisas para as quais eu nasci e para as quais eu dou minha vida. Nasci para amar os outros, nasci para escrever, e nasci para criar meus filhos.
>
> There are three things for which I was born and for which I would give my life. [I] was born to love others, [I] was born to write, and [I] was born to raise [my] children. (*A Descoberta do mundo* 135)

Ferreira suggests that social injustice played an important role in the development of the three Lispector sisters,

> When the three sisters didn't have money, they exchanged the movie theater for a visit to the house of the domestic servant. Passing the villages swimming in the mud, they met face to face with disheveled women carrying their children on their necks. In front of this shocking scenario of misery, Clarice Lispector discovered the social drama: what I saw made me promise that I would not let that continue. The 'protector of animals', as she was called in the house, had an instinct of a perplexed heart in front of the great injustices that are submitted to the so-called classes of the less privileged. The attitude of his daughter, brought Pedro Lispector to say that she would be a lawyer. (47)

Certainly these scenes from Clarice's and Elisa's childhood (although only Clarice is mentioned by name here, Ferreira points out that these regular outings belonged to the three sisters and not only to Clarice) show that both entertained feelings of sensitivity and responsiveness toward the underprivileged, yet their fiction did not become an outlet for their awakened social consciousness. In life also, Clarice did little to stop poverty and misery from continuing in the outside world.

At the same time, while not realizing the goals of a Marxist writer, Clarice used this interest in the lives of others, specifically those from a different, lower social stratum, like their cleaning lady, in order to remake her own identity. The figure of the maid (empregada or domestica) is one of the most persistent and repetitive personages, appearing both in Clarice's fiction and chronicles. Sonia Roncador writes that the maid is the closest link between the bourgeoisie and the lower classes, and that she allows Lispector to enter the marginal zones that the author normally does not inhabit:

> [. . .] ela igualmente cumpre um papel mediador importante para os que, como Lispector, sentem-se 'seduzidos' pela miséria das zonas urbanas periféricas, como os mocambos, (recifences) e as favelas e subúrbios (cariocas)
>
> [. . .] she [the maid] equally fulfills the role of the important mediator between those who like Lispector feel 'seduced' by the *mocambos* (of Recife), and the favelas and the suburban areas of Rio" (144).

Yet, while undoubtedly Clarice's interest in maids can be seen as an interest of a solid member of the bourgeoisie for the alien world of poverty, a case can also be made for Clarice's interest in maids arising out of her own biographical ties to a marginalized ethnicity and an impoverished childhood. Specifically, the maid Janair in *A paixão segundo G.H.,* is tied to Clarice's feelings of guilt over being in a position of command over another person. In *A paixão segundo G.H.* , the narrator G.H. struggles to understand the silence of her domestic Janair, in a description that can be interpreted to reference both the tools of writing (fingers and charcoal) and fury or frustration (through the sound that is made with the screech of charcoal). She says, "Charcoal and fingernails joining, charcoal and fingernails, tranquil and compact the anger of that woman who was the representative of a silence as if she represented a foreign country, an African queen. And here inside my house, resided a stranger, an indifferent enemy" (47). Implicit in her understanding of Janair is the idea of Janair's own hatred of her, G.H. the employer, and the idea that parallel to the employer/employee relationship is the relationship of the oppressed black and the white oppressor. G.H. the narrator makes a very clear distinction between herself the white, powerful woman, and the 'stranger,' her black maid who hates her for being made to serve her.

G.H., who enters her maid's empty room, sees that on a white wall Janair has drawn a mummy; she infers that the mummy is herself and realizes that she as a white woman seems to Janair as someone who has outlived her time, her usefulness, as someone who plays no role in modernity or the future. When she enters Janair's room she

feels violated because unlike the rest of the house created by her, she does not belong here. She notes at first that Janair, from her room, was able to enjoy and take an advantage in the view provided to her and subsequently in the world that she could not attain,

> The room was the opposite of what I had created in my house, the opposite of the smooth beauty which resulted from my talent of arranging, of my talent for living, the opposite of my irony: it was a violation of my quotation marks which made of me a citation of myself. The room was a painting of an empty stomach. (46)

The life that G.H. had constructed for herself, her identity based on organizing, cleaning up, orderliness, belonging to a catalogue begins to fall apart in the room. At the same time that she is unmade, the vision of the room as "an empty stomach" drives home the point of the maid's poverty, and allows Clarice to dislocate her own identity by aligning with the maid and discarding the identity of her protagonist, the wealthy, white employer.

Clarice's own relationships with her cleaning ladies were also quite paradoxical. On numerous occasions both in the *Jornal do Brasil* and in short stories she records her relationships with them and her responses to them. In an entry from 25 November 1967 she explains how a maid working in her house asked to borrow her books,

> Fiquei atrapalhada. Fui franca: disse-lhe que ela não ia gostar de meus livros porque eles eram um pouco complicados. Foi então que, continuando a arrumar, e com voz ainda mais abafada, respondeu: "Gosto de coisas complicadas. Não gusto de água com açúcar." (*A descoberta do mundo* 51)

> I felt embarrassed but decided to speak frankly. I told her I did not think she would enjoy my books because they are rather complicated. Whereupon, still tidying up and with her voice sounding even more muffled, she replied: 'I like complicated things. I can't stomach sugared water'" (*Discovering the World* 66).

What is Clarice seeking to gain from including this little vignette? Is she seeking to bare her soul and show how as an enlightened Brazilian she still looks down on her maid and does not think her intelligent enough to read her books, or is she completely blind to the

implications of writing such a politically damaging passage and seeks to get a chuckle out of her readers who will comment on the intelligence of her maid? Roncador notes,

> Contudo, a recusa em compartilhar sua produção literária com uma doméstica revela que a autora, embora ressentida dos ataques críticos, tampouco parecia interessada em promover uma imagem de sua escrita por assim dizer "democrática", ou seja, accessível e apreciada por membros de distintas classes sociais.
>
> The refusal to share her literary production with a maid reveals that the author, although suffering from critical attacks, did not appear interested in promoting an image of her writing that was 'democratic' or in other words accessible and appreciated by members of distinct social classes (176).

It is hard to reconcile Clarice, the enlightened intellectual of her day, and someone who would question the intelligence of a person simply because of their social class and profession, but unmistakably this is what the passage implies.

Lispector writes,

> Por falar em empregadas, em relação às quais sempre me senti culpada e exploradora, piorei muito depois que assisti à peça As criadas, dirigida pelo ótimo Martim Gonçalves. Fiquei toda alterada. Vi como a devoção que às vezes recebemos delas écheia de um ódio mortal. . . Às vezes o ódio não é declarado, toma exatamente a forma de uma devoção e de uma hulmildade especiais. (*A descoberta do mundo* 54)
>
> Speaking of housemaids—who have always made me feel guilty of exploitation. I felt much worse after seeing Genet's play 'The Maids', brilliantly directed by Martin Gonçalves. The play distressed me. I began to realize that their devotion is one of implacable hatred" and she goes on to say later on, "Sometimes the hatred is not apparent, having been concealed by protestations of devotion and self-abnegation. (*Discovering the World* 68)

She continues to discuss her maids in *Discovering the World*. She mentions that her real-life maid Jandira (whose name bears a remarkable resemblance to the maid in *A paixão segundo G.H.,*Janair) did not believe Clarice would pay her wage as promised; and the maid Ivonne whom she had to fire after the latter screamed at her (65-66). It becomes apparent that maids were the most obvious symbols of the liminal world with which she

came into contact. If she projected her own marginalized Jewish identity, which made her uncomfortable, onto members of the non-elite, like the maids in her stories, it was also because they made her uncomfortable. Even when she identified with them as an individual who herself at one time had been marginalized, she was also keenly aware of her present-day class and status which could have made them hate her.

Memmi develops a thesis of why in most societies Jews are more often found on the left of the political spectrum than on the right, he believes it is their innate sympathy for the liminal, the people who find themselves in the same condition that historically most Jews have been in. Memmi says

> Their [the Jews] participation in the parties of the Left in every country in the world is relatively very important. My first impulse, an immediate sympathy, urges me toward the underprivileged, the downtrodden of history and of the city. I am sure that my Jewishness is largely the reason for this: my heart understands them and my mind agrees with them. (221-22)

His last words echo Clarice's own sentiments. Although Clarice Lispector herself seldom talked about her identity or wrote a Jewish character (except as previously mentioned the character "o judeu" in "Onde Estivestes de Noite"), still she created a double of the liminal Jewish figure in her characters--the blighted and persecuted of society.

Ferreira writes that Clarice often replied to the question of what she thought of literary agency, or engaged literature, "Frankly, I feel socially committed. Everything I write is tied, at least in my mind, to the real world in which we live. Perhaps this aspect of my writing will become stronger one day" (qtd. in Pontiero 29). In an interview with O Globo she answers a question about her authorial leanings with the following: "I am not an engaged writer. There is no message in my work. Many people say that I fulfill the role of a poet writing prose. I am convinced that whoever says this has been mistaken. Not even I know how to judge myself. I can only be understood through the reading of

my works." (Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa Archives, interview with Clarice Lispector O Globo 2 July 1969). Once again, she reiterates that she does not write with any one message in mind; rather, each work should be taken as it is coming from intuition and not intellect. For anyone who seeks to understand her through her biography or background she issues a warning: only her literature can serve as a guide for those who wish to issue an opinion on her.

This defense mechanism which Clarice employs protects her against being identified not only as a Jew of Ukrainian origin, but also a leftist and feminist, and suggests her antagonistic stance toward all –isms, "It is interesting to note that Lispector, as is the case with many successful women writers of her generation, denied that she was a feminist" (Santos 27). Clarice writes about an interview with a young reporter,

> Perguntou-me se eu me considerava um aescritora brasileira ou simplesmente um a escritora. Respondi que, em primeiro lugar, por mais feminine que fosse a mulher, esta não era uma escritora, e sim um escritor. (*A descoberta do mundo* 69-70)
>
> She asked me if I preferred to think of myself as a Brazilian writer or as a woman writer who happened to live in Brazil. In reply I pointed out that no matter how feminine a woman might be, she is not a woman writer but simply a writer. (*Discovering the World* 82)

Once again Clarice reiterates that first and foremost she is a writer, and her sex is secondary, and even though she does not say it ethnicity or any other category of belonging is also second.

In an earlier interview from 1967, she was asked if she considered herself a leftist, "I responded that I wished for Brazil a social regimen not copied from that of England, but adapted to our own molds" (Ferreira 231). Her responses are always contradictory and sometimes evasive: she maintains that she is not an 'engaged' writer, while stating that she is 'politically committed'. These statements point to her reluctance to link herself

to any political movement, while at the same time she lays claim to an interest in the social and political problems facing her contemporaries.

While writing for the *Jornal do Brasil* from August 1967 to December 1973 Clarice often brings up her worries and interests, specifically hunger in Brazil. Nonetheless her appeals are so broad and lacking in specifics that they often sound as if a film celebrity were pronouncing them instead of an intellectual. In an entry from 16 September 1967 we read the following,

> And I hope with all my heart that our most serious problem will be resolved: that of hunger. Without having to wait for twenty-five years because there is no time to be lost: thousands of men, women and children walk the streets like corpses when they should be receiving treatment in hospital for malnutrition. There is so much poverty in our midst that the government would be justified in declaring a state of emergency as if the country were facing a national crisis. (*Discovering the World* 47)

And she comes back to the topic of hunger: "No, no, I do not feel sorry for those who die of hunger. What I feel is rage. And I can see no harm in stealing to eat" (*Discovering the World* 53). This is an oft-repeated topic in her chronicles. She writes further,

> Fury has saved my life. Without it, what would have become of me? How could I have borne to read those headlines reporting that one hundred starving children die every day in Brazil? Is anger my deep revulsion against being human? I am tired of being human. And angry at feeling so much love.[…]
>
> But there is only one fury which is blessed: the fury of those who suffer privation. (*Discovering the World* 180)

Yet, while Clarice's sympathies are also with the downtrodden, her personal relationship to the poor is not always clear-cut. She vacillates between acceptance and guilt; she wants to work on behalf of those who go hungry, and yet she is not ashamed to point out to her readers her own sometimes hypocritical reaction to poverty that is at once full of pity and revulsion. In a chronicle entitled "Hateful Charity," she explains how a boy on the street asks her to buy him a pastry. She buys it for him but feels ashamed that

someone might or might not have seen her. Then she gets on a bus and gives a woman 2,000 cruzeiros (*Discovering the World* 324-26). She dislikes the inauthentic feelings in herself; charity for the wrong reasons and her own hypocrisy, which lies in publicly speaking out against poverty or torture while continuing to abstain from taking meaningful action in her private life, become 'hateful' feelings inside herself that she must contend with. This can be linked to her views of the writer and social justice, specifically, the dubious value of a writer linking her literary craft to the aims of social justice.

In 1968, Clarice and 300 other intellectuals, including Caetano Veloso and other Brazilian luminaries, marched on the palace of the governor of Rio de Janeiro state to protest the political situation, when a student, Edson Luis de Lima Souto, was killed by the police. This incident resulted in the tightening grip of Brazil's new military dictatorship. Clarice writes in a chronicle for Jornal do Brasil in April of 1968, "I am in solidarity in body and soul, with the tragedy of the students of Brazil" (*Discovering the World* 241). Even in this statement Clarice is guarded and her chronicles are never rants against the tyranny of the police state in which she and others like her are living. Clarice's literature is not engaged in the current events as are the lyrics of a Brazilian musician like Chico Buarque, who at the same time wrote his famous song 'Calice,' a double entendre on the censorship of the police state and the Catholic Church's use of the communion chalice.

A number of critics have commented on Clarice's reaction to the political and social events around her, or rather, her lack of a stronger reaction. It is certainly true that momentous political events such as the military takeover in Brazil in 1964 are not directly reflected in Clarice. The critic Marta Peixoto wrote: "Her work does not thematize the literal political violence of war and torture or other overt forms of state

brutality. There are crimes in Lispector, but they are used mainly for their symbolic value, as vehicles and correlations of guilt and inner conflict" (Passionate Fictions 101). While her political actions seem thin compared to those of her contemporaries, and her work abstains from concretizing the Jewish aspects of her biography, her sublimated background is reflected in some of her characters, like Macabéa and Janair. While concrete political events are not thematized, aspects of her biography are.

Clarice certainly never works with grand events; she has always believed that such events need to be dealt with in action and not in writing. On the other hand, there are several novels and short stories where a subtle theme of injustice is woven in. In *A hora da estrela* not only does the heroine Macabéa come from the northeast like Clarice herself, but one of her chief problems is lacking literacy, and education and being unable to function in the Portuguese language (even though her language background is solely the Portuguese), directly mirroring Clarice's own complex concerning the Portuguese language as a replacement for her identity. The critic Marting writes, "Only *A hora da estrela*, Lispector's final novel, makes writing the site of less than ambiguous narratorial commentary on poverty, social class, and brutal, physical social violence" (153). In *A paixão segundo G.H.*, the protagonist is an upper-class white woman who has found her own identity usurped, when her maid, to whom she refers often as "negra Africana," redefines G.H.'s identity by drawing her. Therefore, while in *A hora da estrela* Lispector plays with the male hegemonic gaze when the narrator Rodrigo S.M. both creates and destroys his character Macabéa, in *A paixão segundo G.H.* Santos writes that "it is this social confrontation with the absent maid that leads G.H. to situate herself as a subject" (77-78). Lispector inverts the hegemonic white gaze and creates the gaze of the other, liminal or marginalized, when Janair the maid is the one who calls forth the identity of the hegemonic white figure of G.H.

The defining description of the problem of identity projection in the work of Clarice and the duality of the hegemonic narrator and subaltern protagonist comes in a thought from G.H. about her domestic's room: "The room did not have a point that one could call its beginning, nor a point that could be considered its end" (50). As a white woman, she had never before considered herself under anyone else's gaze but her own. She had never before seen herself from anyone else's point of view, "For years I had been judged only by my equals and my own environment, that were in sum, made by me and for me. Janair was the first person fully extraneous to me of whose look I became conscious" (*A paixão segundo G.H.* 44). The marginalized maid comes into ownership of the gaze which had previously belonged only to the hegemonic narrator, her friends and colleagues.

In *A paixão segundo G.H.* , the main character G.H. is in fact constantly talking about her origins, and a number of the passages reflect the same autobiographical statements Clarice made in interviews. G.H. says, "I was born without a mission, my nature did not impose one; I always had a hand too delicate, to impose a role on. I did not impose a role but organized myself to be understood by me, I could not stand finding myself in a catalogue. My question, if there was one, wasn't 'who am I' but 'among whom am I?'" (*A paixão segundo G.H.* 27-28). The narrator explains that being catalogued, understanding the category or denomination of humanity that she belonged to was the most important thing for her in life; at the same time, this idea is contradictory to her claim that she lost track of her origins, as this would be the easiest way to catalogue oneself and to understand where and to whom one belonged. "I always liked to arrange. I suppose that this is my true vocation. Ordering things, I create and understand myself at the same time" (34). This passage points out that the narrator is implicitly aware of a system of belonging. She is interested in being classified and relegated to a group. These

ideas that Clarice's character entertains are alien to the author in all but one respect: she liked to organize herself through the literary craft of identity projection as a Brazilian type, even as she defied the idea of identity as destiny in her personal history.

Yet, there is an ethnic group to which Clarice attempts to belong to throughout her life, and that is the group of authentic Brazilians. While she lived abroad, Clarice writes, constantly thought about Brazil; her correspondence abounds with pronouncements that echo a Brazil-centric refrain, "[I] lived mentally in Brazil, I lived 'on borrowed time.' Simply because I like living in Brazil, Brazil is the only place in the world where I don't ask myself, terrified: what am I doing here after all, why am I here, my God" (Ribeiro qtd. in Moser 236). In life and in fiction Clarice invents a sphere of independent individualism, which determines her Brazilianness by granting her the freedom to reject all that blocks her authenticity. Being Brazilian, for Clarice, represents a state in which she feels most alive and in which is answerable only to herself.

While Clarice had always opposed any classification that might have pigeonholed her as a writer who belonged to any particular –ism or as an immigrant who belonged to a specific ethnic group, she had also removed herself from her origins. Similarly, Clarice's protagonist in *A paixão segundo G.H.* pronounces the following: "Two minutes after being born I had already lost my origins" (28). Again, G.H. is repeating word for word Clarice's own sentiments, not only about the loss of origin, but also about the lack of community that she willingly imposes on herself to assert an authentic identity, free from outside influences such as family ties (incidentally a title of a work of short stories by her, *Laços de familia*, 1960), ethnicity, tradition and religion.

Yet while attempting to flee from her Jewish origins and highlight a Brazilian identity through the act of writing, many critics claim she returns to specifically Jewish themes in her later two novels. In Berta Waldman's discussion of the Jewish aspects of

Clarice's text, *A hora da estrela*, she points out that the protagonist Macabéa is a reference to the Book of the Maccabees, "two volumes—not canonical—of the Bible, considered apocryphal by the Jews" (Waldman 19). Like the Maccabees, Macabéa is also oppressed by the powerful. In *A paixão segundo G.H.* – on the other hand, Lispector provides a discussion of pure and impure foods, reminiscent of Jewish laws, such as the food laws governing impure foods, which her character breaks by eating a cockroach. "I felt impure, as the Bible speaks of the impure. Why was the Bible so preoccupied with the impure, and made a list of impure and forbidden animals? Why, if, like all the rest, they too had been created? And why was the impure forbidden? I had committed the forbidden act of touching something impure" (*A paixão segundo G.H.* 81).

One entire chapter of the novel is a dissection of biblical passages dealing with the impurity of certain animals, and direct quotations concerning prohibited foods (prohibited for whom if not for Jews?) The narrator says: "I opened my mouth in fright: to ask for help. Why? Because I did not want to become impure like the cockroach? What ideal joined me to the sentiment of an idea? Why should I not make myself impure, exactly as I was discovering my whole self? What was I scared of? Being impure with what?" (*A paixão segundo G.H.* 83). While the cockroach acts as the Other, it also becomes for the author a double of her Jewish self. She notes over and over the ancient history of the cockroach, their historical presence, the antiquity in their eyes, in effect crafting this is a metaphor for her own background:

> It was a cockroach so old, it was immemorial. What always made cockroaches so repugnant to me was that they were obsolete and at the same time ever present. To know that they had been on earth, and equal to today, even before the first dinosaurs had appeared, to know that the first man had found them proliferated… (*A paixão segundo G.H.* 52)

> It was a cockroach as old as fossilized fish. It was a cockroach as old as salamanders, and chimeras, and griffins, and leviathans. It was as ancient as a legend. I looked at its mouth: there was the real mouth….
>
> I had never seen a cockroach's mouth. I, truthfully—I had never really seen a cockroach. I had only felt repugnance at their ancient, ever-present existence--but I had never confronted one, even in my mind. (A paixão segundo G.H. 62-63)

The narrator expresses her love and acceptance of the cockroach--whom no one else will touch; in doing so the cockroach becomes the Other, but the other as a subaltern figure, the Other as the abused, repressed figure for whom no-one feels pity. Joining herself with the Other, partaking of the body of the Other, not only is the narrator writing a communion (a very Christian idea incongruous amid what is essentially a Jewish thematic), but becoming the Other. Yet this Other is something Clarice has identified with always because of her own history and ancestry, coming from a people who were also considered 'untouchable' and whom no one wanted to approach.

Clarice belongs to a group of Jewish artists who, having experienced the suffering of their own group, felt the need to portray the suffering of others in the world. One prominent example in Brazil, is Lasar Segall, who, upon immigrating to Brazil began to paint, instead of his usual Eastern European Jewish prototypes, Afro-Brazilians. In fact, in a number of self-portraits Segall remakes himself into an Afro-Brazilian. Yet as described in the previous chapter as part of the argument about assimilation in the anti-Semitic Brazil of the Vargas era, Jews in Brazil – as opposed to European Jewish refugees of the World War II era – were already better off than their under privileged cousins from across the ocean. To be different from the people who abused her ancestors – who in fact led her family to flee the Ukraine – Clarice was interested in making social justice a part of her work. Unlike her sister Elisa, who recreated the family history in a work of Zionism, Clarice sought out new injustices. Her characters would be the haves and the have-nots, but Clarice would never take a firm stand on one or the other side of

the divide, as a socialist or a socialist realist writer might. In her understanding and use of exile, social justice and identity projection, Clarice, the cleverest of writers, always defied the easy choice.

In *A hora da estrela* Clarice takes on the voice of the hegemonic narrator, yet it is in the thematic material of this novel that Clarice's manipulation of her own identity, and her Jewish ethnicity, can be uncovered. She knows her impoverished subjects because she in effect came from that world. Clarice was once quoted as saying, "The life for the Russian immigrants was difficult but I did not know that we were that poor, and because of this I felt alive and very happy in those first years" ("Morte de Clarice Lispector"). She is also the hidden figure behind the hegemonic narrator, Rodrigo S.M., because as a Jewish woman who had come from a poor background she had attained an enviable position in Brazil's high society In addition, the group of Jews who had immigrated to Brazil in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and who at that time were the liminal figures on par with that of the other Brazilian marginalized ethnicities and classes, were no longer impoverished but had succeeded into the middle class. It is this passing, or transition of Brazilian Jews from the illiterate immigrant masses to the literate, stable ethnic group which complicates Clarice's feelings towards her identity, and removes a need to identify and subsequently write about her background.

'The Tiniest Woman in the World' (from the 1960 collection *Laços de familia*), Clarice's story about an incredibly small woman from a tribe of pygmies can also serve to illustrate the theme of "the other" in her writing. A white explorer, Marcel Pretre, writes a few articles about Little Flower, the tiny pigmy woman from Equatorial Africa. The story plays with a theme that divides the characters into opposing parties of 'them' and 'us.' Little Flower is described in a non-flattering way, "O nariz chato, a cara preta, os olhos fundos, os pés espalmados. Parecia um cachorro." "The flat nose, the black face,

the deep set eyes, the splay feet. She looked like a dog" (*Laços de familia* 83). Yet the reader questions whether these are the words of the narrator, or the filtered words of the readers of the Sunday paper in which Little Flower's picture is published. Once again, as in *A hora da estrela*, Clarice is playing with the idea that the identity of the interlocutor or narrator/author might not be clear, making her own ideas or thoughts on the matter quite hermetic. Is Clarice a racist writer or is she in fact inscribing racism onto her characters? The readers of the newspaper are shown in the story to be intrigued by Little Flower, but only as far as to wonder what it would be like for her to serve them in their own houses (again a theme that resonates with Lispector's own writings about domestic servants). At the same time, the other African tribes, are shown to have no more empathy than the Europeans, as they view the pygmies as food to be hunted. Waldman writes:

> [...] the perturbing presence of difference, the cruelty and the barbaric side of the civilized, dissimulating under politeness and scientific practice. The voyage of conquest and the discovery by a European of Africa will continue being marked for his desire of domination and devouring of the other… (63)

The Europeans who arrive in Africa look down on the 'savages' while their first-world cruelty is no different from the less 'civilized' cruelty that their subjects show each other.

Waldman writes, "The story 'The Tiniest Woman in the World' remakes the ethnocentric intention of those who are employed in extinguishing the difference, unmasking the attempts to reduce the other to the same, and of discriminating the difference as inferior or aberrant" (64). She compares this to how the Nazis saw the Jews, as a lower substratum and far from natural. Waldman asserts that Lispector creates a literature focused on the Other, "Meanwhile, Clarice Lispector erects a literature which has as one of its principal foundations the question of the other, of the difference…." (65). What Waldman calls a literature whose center is found in the exploration of the

Other, is a literature that projects the biographical problematic and tendencies of the author onto the Other.

It is possible that Clarice's influence for this story was her own short stop in Africa (Liberia and Portuguese Guinea) on her way to her husband's diplomatic post in Europe in the summer of 1944,

> Perguntei [ao português]: mas é necessário tratá-los como se não fossem seres humanos? Respondeu-me: de outro modo eles não trabalham. Fiquei meditative. A África misteriosa. Neste mesmo momento em que alguém me lê, lá está a África indomável vivendo. Lamento a África. Gostaria de poder fazer um mínimo que fosse por ela. Mas não tenho nenhum poder. Só o da palavra, ás vezes. Só ás vezes.
>
> I asked [the Portuguese] but is it necessary to treat them as if they weren't human? He responded, this is the only way they work. I became pensive, mysterious Africa. At this moment while someone is reading me, there it is: Africa the indomitable, living. I weep for Africa. I would like to be able do at least the minimum to help her. But I have no such power. My only power is to write, and that only at times. Only at times. (*A descoberta do mundo* 552).

These short stops in different African countries a month after the Normandy landings in 1944 provide some of the few thoughts pertaining to current events that Clarice left in her works. But while lamenting the cruelty of the Portuguese, she found no words to render on the subject of the situation in Europe, which was similar in its cruelty. "[Seeing Guineans being whipped,] I asked: but do you have to treat them as if they weren't human beings? He answered: they won't work any other way. I thought about it: mysterious Africa" (Kaufman qtd. in Moser 138).

There are parallels in this duality of the hegemonic narrator and the Other in *A hora da estrela* and *A paixão segundo G.H.* In *A hora da estrela*, Clarice is identified both with Rodrigo the narrator, a stand-in for Lispector's identity as a white woman and therefore part of the hegemonic majority, and with Macabéa, the immigrant, a stand-in for Clarice's immigrant and minority origins. The narrator feels guilty writing Macabéa,

and similarly, G.H. also represents Lispector's own quest to return to her historical self by embracing or eating the cockroach. Santos writes, "It is in getting closer to Macabéa that Rodrigo becomes sympathetic to her condition and consequently transforms himself into a subject being written about" (89). Obviously, Clarice is playing with the 'dead white male writer' concept that has been challenged in so many university curricula and by so many writers of color, questioning the value of stories of the subaltern from the point of view of the hegemonic group. Clarice perverts her material, looking down on her object, pitying her, and then killing her off when she becomes inconvenient. The narrator Rodrigo S.M. performs whiteness as can be expected from a white male hegemonic figure, he pities her, toys with her, and the kills her off at the end, as if to say that she is not worth the effort. Yet the author behind this narrator, Clarice's identity as a woman and a Jew, both subaltern figures, projected onto the narrator writing the story of Macabéa adds a level of self-awareness to a story that makes it one of foremost examples of postmodern literature. Clarice criticizes this hegemonic figure as she creates a reason for his existence.

"The 'A hora da estrela ' is the moment in which one achieves recognition in the other's eyes and for Macabéa this comes only in her death" (Santos 94). At Clarice's funeral, the hour of her Jewish star arrived when her friends and colleagues were surprised to find themselves in a Jewish burial ground, with a Kaddish and verses from the Hebrew Bible laying the Brazilian writer to rest.

Chapter VI: Purging the Semitic Self in Stalinist USSR

Among Russian Jewish authors, the two most prominent non-Jewish Jewish authors to be left out of anthologies, encyclopedias and discussions of Russian and Soviet Jewish literature are Evgenia Ginzburg, author of probably the most famous memoir to come out of the Stalinist Gulags, *Into the Whirlwind* and her son Vasilii Aksyonov, author of numerous novels and later a dissident. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* has an entry for Ginzburg "Russian writer; mother of the writer Vasili Axenov" listing Ginzburg's work Into the Whirlwind and her poem "And again like grown white Jews"[21] which she wrote while serving her sentence, but the encyclopedia does not have an entry for Aksyonov (7: 611). Critics often look for lengthy discussions of Jewish identity in the writers they choose to include in these works that determine the 'canonical' works of a particular literature, and are often partial towards those writers who have not converted to Christianity. Ginzburg converted to Christianity and Aksyonov was baptized, yet Ginzburg includes instances of experiencing anti-Semitism in her text, although she glibly evades other instances when she could have delved into the subject; Aksyonov, on the other hand rewrites the history of the Jewish side of his family in *The Burn*. Critic Ruth Wisse's writes, "I mean simply that in Jewish literature the authors or characters know and let the reader know that they are Jews" (15), and under this definition of Jewish literature both Ginzburg and Aksyonov would qualify as Jewish writers, she mentions in her memoirs that she is Jewish and he makes Jewish identity a notable feature of his autobiographical protagonist in his novel *The Burn*. Yet, all critical works on Soviet and

[21] И вновь, как седые евреи,/Воскликнем, надеждой палимы,/И голос сорвется, слабея:/
-На будущий в Ерусалиме!/...Такая уж, видно, порода!/Замучены, нищи, гонимы,/
Все ж скажем в ночь нового года:/-На будущий – в Ерусалиме! (And again like white haired Jews/ We'll pronounce, burned by hope/ And our voice will break, weakening:/To next year in Jerusalem/You can see our breed!/Tortured, beggared, exiled,/ We'll still say on the eve of the New Year:/ To next year in Jerusalem!) (1990 Ginzburg 857)

Russian Jewish literature, including Maxim D. Shrayer's comprehensive *An Anthology Of Jewish-Russian Literature: Two Centuries Of Dual Identity In Prose And Poetry*, leave out these writers.

Two of Aksyonov's works of fiction, *The Burn* and *Generations of Winter*, rely on elements, narrative twists and thematic entanglements that were borrowed from his mother's personal history and work. The examination of Ginzburg's and Aksyonov's works provides an interesting second case study, after the example of Clarice and her sister Elisa, of Jewish literary collaboration within a particular family.

The art term negative space applies to (most prominently) works of abstract expressionism where equal weight is given to both the empty space and to the corresponding filled space of a sculpture around it. In my application of this term to literature, I show that important details about a writer's work can be seen by focusing on the empty space made of ethnic identity. Elisa and Vasilii Aksyonov fill in the negative space that was created by Clarice and Ginzburg as a means of distancing themselves from their Jewish identity. Both cases illuminate why Jewish identity was not thematized in the artists' works.

For Ginzburg, Jewishness becomes a negative space. In numerous episodes throughout her memoir she erases the words Jew, Jewish, Jewishness, and anti-Semitism when anyone else would have used those words to make their narrative more self-explanatory. She chooses to exclude those words from her biographical vocabulary. The following two chapters will explain the reasons behind Ginzburg's choice. Like only a few Russian Jews of her generation she grew up speaking Russian and claiming Russia as her cultural patrimony. As a fervent Komsomol youth and later Communist Party member Ginzburg must have agreed with Lenin's (and later Stalin's) view that the Jewish people did not constitute a nationality of their own, because it was believed no land and

no language united them (Hebrew was considered a dead language and Yiddish a jargon). Also, as an early Communist Ginzburg was a true internationalist at the time internationalism implied a belief in the equality of all. When Ginzburg was released from the camps and sat down to write her memoirs she had no idea whether they would be published. At the same time, all Russian Jewish writers had learned to self-censor themselves, especially concerning the subject of Jewish identity, and as will be shown here, through government pressure references to Jewish subjects and themes were gradually erased from Soviet literature. Even though her memoir is autobiographical it holds all the elements of a good novel, Kolchevska writes,

> Whirlwind reads like a novel, has a polished narrative exposition, a strong authorial voice alternating with dialogue that is staged and characters who perform, a grasp of the difference between 'real' and narrative time, and a wealth of literary and cultural references. ("The Art of Memory" 152)

Therefore even though Ginzburg was writing a memoir she was under the influence of the taboos that were applied to Soviet fiction. After World War II, official government censorship did not allow for the publication of works that touched on any aspect of the Jewish livelihood. Soviet Jewish writers had no models of Jewish writing to which to turn.

This chapter provides a brief historical summary of Russian Jewish history from the 1920s (when Ginzburg was a Komsomol member) to the late 1970s (when Aksyonov was forced to immigrate), and the relationship between historical fact and the writers' biographies. In the historical part of this chapter I show that Jewish subject matter became almost completely tabooed in mainstream literature, and writers like Aksyonov had to completely relearn to portray Jewish characters without slipping into caricature. Also, Aksyonov's semi-auto-biographical novel *The Burn* is used to fill in the negative space that Ginzburg has inserted in *Into the Whirlwind*, for instance all the biographical

material relating to her Jewish family prior to her arrest has been taken out of the memoir, but reinserted into Aksyonov's novel. Also, this chapter attempts to supplement the biographical details about Ginzburg and Aksyonov with a reading of Russian-Jewish identity taken from works published in Jewish Samizdat in the 1970s by prominent Jewish scientists, psychologists and writers. The underground publication Jewish Samizdat (devoted to works on Jewish affairs and identity) began to be printed clandestinely in 1970; the impetus for this was the Six Day War which signaled a reawakening of Russian Jewish identity and elicited a negative reaction from the Soviet authorities. This fact is important for how it relates to Vasilii Aksyonov's two novels, *The Burn* and *Generations of Winter*, which to some extent began to deal with the Jewish question.

RUSSIAN-JEWISH HISTORY

It is important to devote time to providing an overview of the subject of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Of the three twentieth century nations in which the subjects of this literary study lived and wrote, the Soviet Union had the only institutionalized anti-Semitic regime. The Brazil of Clarice Lispector, for example, which comes closer to institutional anti-Semitism than Kaufman and Hart's America, flirted with fascism, notably during a period of her life when she was married to a foreign diplomat, but Jewish subject matter was not censored, nor were Jewish cultural figures by and large targeted for their ethnicity. Ginzburg lived firsthand the dramatic shift in the Soviet policy toward Jews, from a new nation with a stated goal of protecting its Jewish citizens to a state apparatus that liquidated Jewish culture.

The Bolsheviks under Lenin fought against the problem of anti-Semitism. A special order released in 1918 mandated the beginning of a concerted effort against anti-

Semitic propaganda and anti-Semitism in general. One of Lenin's recorded speeches was on the subject of anti-Semitism and it was the only speech which Stalin did not reprint or rerecord when he came to power. Propaganda attempted to combat the negative image of the Jew by highlighting the Jewish presence in the party and the revolutionary movement, and showing that anti-Semitism was disseminated by the tsar's henchmen in order to divert attention from the failings of the regime. Shternshis notes that the Soviet regime used many unorthodox means to combat anti-Semitism, including literally putting the concept of anti-Semitism on trial and making silent films on the issue as well (164-165). More than 40 books targeting anti-Semitism came out in the 1920s (Blum A. 32).

Ginzburg was born in 1904 and matured in the 1920s while official government policy favored access to equal rights, education and work for Jews as well as for people of all nationalities. In effect, when Ginzburg was a student, and starting her career as a teacher and party member, she would not have been exposed to negative images of Jews in the media. Shternshis writes,

> Soviet Russian Jewish culture was full of contradictions. The state-sponsored campaign against popular anti-Semitism, which was intended for non-Jewish audiences, had a profound impact on the cultural identity of Russian-speaking Jews. Movies, brochures, magazines, and theatrical performances portrayed Jews positively in order to fight racial prejudice. Yet the most attentive audience of these works consisted of Jews who were deprived of other ways to openly express their ethnic identity. The majority of the Soviet Jews born in the early 1920s consider themselves to be 'culturally Russian': they adore Russian ballet, theater, classical literature, and even folksongs. (181)

Shternshis explains that a people whose ethnic identity was taken away from them needed a substitute, in effect Russian culture filled the hole that had been left empty by a tabooed ethnicity. Ginzburg came of age during the liberal atmosphere of the New Economic Policy (NEP), fully embracing Russian culture, literature and music to the exclusion of all other influences, specifically Jewish influences.

In the 1920s and 1930s Soviet authorities thought it important to introduce Yiddish authors to the wider reading public, underscoring Lenin's policy to fight back against anti-Semitism.

> Before the 1930s works of some Yiddish writers outside the Soviet Union, such as Sholem Asch and Joseph Opatoshu, appeared only in Russian translation but not in Yiddish. From 1931 to 1940, the government sponsored 145 translations of Yiddish belles-lettres, one-quarter of which were children's books. (Shternshis 148)

When publications did come out that spoke pointedly about the Jewish religion they attempted to get people to give up their religion in a way that did not discriminate between the Jews and the Christians, "Thus, paradoxically, the Russian-language publications justified, rather than criticized, Judaism" (Shternshis 150). Yet, while the Soviet Jewish masses thrived in the 1920s, the Jewish political elite began to experience different treatment once Stalin consolidated power.

In fact, Trotsky wrote that the persecution of many party members in the years following the death of Lenin and specifically starting in 1926 already took on an anti-Semitic flavor. He writes that his last name, Bronstein, which had always been in disuse in his family, came to be used by the media in 1926 after his falling out with Stalin,

> However , after my son, Sergei Sedov, was charged with the utterly incredible accusation of plotting to poison workers, the GPU [secret police] announced in the Soviet and foreign press that the "real" (!) name of my son is not Sedov but Bronstein [. . .]. But they were out for other game; that is, they wished to emphasize my Jewish origin and the semi-Jewish origin of my son…at the time of the expulsions of the Opposition from the party, the bureaucracy purposely emphasized the names of Jewish members of casual and secondary importance [. . .]. (qtd. in Chesler 63)

Trotsky explains that to get the public on the side of the authorities old anti-Semitic measures, such as disclosing the Jewish-sounding names of the opposition, began to be

used. The Soviet government had no other sure-fire way of dealing with its opponents than by appealing to the dormant anti-Semitism of the masses.

While the political opposition might have received the brunt of the anti-Semitic practices that became entrenched from 1948 -53, the majority of the Jewish population continued to enjoy numerous benefits previously denied to them. In the 1920s and 1930s, educational institutions opened to Soviet Jews, allowing for greater participation and assimilation. The percentage of Jews living in Moscow and Leningrad increased from about 1% at the turn of the century to close to 10% and 9% respectively, by 1940 (Gur-Gurevitz 116). Gur-Gurevitz writes that in the 1930s, "The percentage of Jews in the category of office workers was four times that of the general population. This occupational stratum included educated people and those defined in the Soviet Union as the 'working intelligentsia'" (118).

In an article in Jewish Samizdat Yahot explains that Russian Jews were relieved to find immediately after the Revolution that they were no longer limited by their ethnic background. This freedom to pursue their education appealed to them to such an extent that they traded their newfound liberty for their historical past:

> Евреи же России и Украины после великой Октябрьской Революции, вырвавшись из черты оседлости, сотворили себе кумир-образование. Они добились его, и перестали быть евреями, чувствовать себя евреями. [....] евреи старались забыть свое кошмарное прошлое, стараясь найти применение столетия накаплившейся и нерасходовавшейся социальной энергии. Именно поэтому, забыв обо всем, они бросились получать единственную в их глазах ценность-образование. [...] Евреи-интеллигенты, понимающие законы природы, всемирную историю, психологию других народов не сознавали самих себя. Они хотели принадлежать миру. (4: 21-22)
>
> After the Great October Revolution Jews of Russia and the Ukraine, escaping from the Pale of Settlement, created an idol out of education. Achieving this, they ceased to be Jews, to feel themselves as Jews. [….] Jews attempted to forget their nightmarish past, attempting to find an outlet for the social energy which had been saved and unspent for centuries. Because of this they threw themselves towards

> achieving the single, value—in their eyes—education. […] The Jewish intelligentsia, which understood the laws of nature, world history, the psychology of other nations, did not realize their own selves. They wanted to belong to the world. (4: 21-22)

Education became the new idol of these Soviet Jews, and they sacrificed their previous religion and culture on the altar of their new deity. As Yahot notes, "they wanted to belong to the world", and it is this belonging to the world which determined why so many Russian authors and especially Ginzburg wanted to write an everyman figure, who did not belong to one specific ethnic group.

The majority of Russian Jews continued to enjoy the new possibilities provided to them by the Soviet regime, but members of the Jewish economic elite, among them landowners and business owners who thrived during the NEP era, were targeted as much as other nationalities (Ukrainian kulaks, Crimean Germans, et. al.,) whose ranks held too many members of the 'unfavorable'classes. Because these purges were irrespective of nationality, even though the Ukrainian government and leading historians like Tim Snyder have made the case that the purges against the Ukrainian kulaks were genocide, the campaign was really about eliminating a class of society across multiple ethnicities. These purges did not have an anti-Semitic bent specifically. In fact, many Jewish Communist party members took part in these actions against the kulaks.

The Communist regime under Lenin looked kindly at national languages. Yet from the beginning of the Revolution the two major Jewish languages (spoken in the territory of the Soviet Union) were treated very differently. Yiddish was considered a proletarian language. Even though Lenin and Stalin both maintained that it was jargon, a language composed of others languages, it was allowed to flourish as a linguistic specimen representative of the masses. Yiddish, as a language, was not hounded by the authorities until after World War II. Hebrew, on the other hand, was labeled as a

bourgeois language. Because it was a dead language used for religious purposes, the efforts to revive Hebrew were seen as sparks of nationalistic-Zionist activity which attempted to provide a continuity for the language that had existed previously only as a liturgical specimen. For only the first two years after the Revolution was the publication of books in Hebrew allowed. Afterwards Hebrew was banned and writers who primarily wrote in Hebrew began to immigrate, Chaim Bialik among them. Hebrew lessons were banned from 1919. For a short while after the Revolution, Hebrew was allowed to be manifest at the Gabima Theater, the Hebrew theater in Moscow (now the Habima Theater, the national theater of Israel). Taken under Stanislavsky's wing, the theater was protected until he died, from outside political winds and from the members of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party, the Yevsektsiia (Евсекция), and especially Dimenstein, the Commissar of the Jewish Section, who hounded it until the theater lost its government subsidy. While Gabima closed in 1926, Yiddish theaters continued to function until the late 1940s. As the active Jewish arm of the Communist Party, the Evsektsiia not only censored Jewish theaters but involved itself with all aspects of Jewish life in the Soviet Union. It was also responsible for closing Jewish schools, both cheders and yeshivas, and for requisitioning synagogue space for other purposes.

If for a while Yiddish and Yiddishists enjoyed preferential treatment in the Soviet Union, upon further examination we find that the breadth of activity of Yiddish writers was limited. The Evsektsiia used government-stipulated criteria to censor the topics upon which Yiddish writers were allowed to write. From the beginning Jewish themes, even those addressed in the majority language of Eastern European Jews, were severely curtailed. Gilboa writes,

> What distinguishes Soviet Jewish literature, however is the fact that apart from the general functions with which it was charged, it was also assigned the specific

> "national" task of deepening the scission between Russian Jews and their national historical sources, and of severing any spiritual and emotional ties they might still have with other Jewish communities [. . .] In 1927, the Association of Jewish Revolutionary Writers in the Ukraine declared that "all vestiges of nationalistic afterpains that are still in evidence among Jewish writers, and which lead only to isolationism and helplessness, must be eradicated." The aims of the class struggle called for a literature that was realistic and militant, rather than a romanticism that hovered in the past. In keeping with these proletarian principles, sharp criticism was leveled at various 'nationalistic and petit bourgeois' manifestations. If Jewish themes appeared to be dealt with excessively, if too many Jewish characters were portrayed in a novel, or if some of the phrasing suggested nostalgia for the Jewish township—these were regarded as 'deviations.' In the course of the campaign waged against what was termed 'nationalistic apologia', even the presentation of Jewish characters in a favorable light was condemned as 'isolationism'. Excessive portrayal of the Jewish kolhoz member, for example, was branded as a narrow, 'Pale of Settlement' approach, which smacked of Yiddishkeit and distracted from the main issue [. . .] (98)

From 1934 on Jewish themes began to be censored. Arlen Blum explains that a number of Russian Jewish writers who were writing in the 1930s could no longer write about pogroms. While in the 1920s to the mid-1930s there was no obvious anti-Semitism in the type of censorship that the government exhibited,

> Объяснение в том , что в это время (в 1934 г., когда печатались первые рассказы Гроссмана) на тему любых погромов, хотя бы и 'белых' было наложено идеологическое табу.
>
> The explanation is that in that time (1934, when the first short stories of Grossman were being published) the theme of any pogroms, even white ones, came under an ideological taboo. (Blum, A. 74).

Blum writes that the state censorship at this time began to censor words referring to the nationality of characters in novels and stories,

> На некоторые слова накладывается идеологическое табу; во всяком случае, их рекомендуется употреблять в печати как можно реже и ни в коем случае не акцентировать на них внимание. Так происходит со словами 'еврей', 'еврейский'[...]

> An ideological taboo is imposed on certain words: in this case, it is recommended that they be seldom used in print and attention should not be accented on them. This happens with words like 'Jew', 'Jewish'[…](Blum A. 78).

The official censorship prevented numerous Jewish writers from writing freely about their ethnicity, yet notwithstanding this information critics[22] writing on Russian Jewish literature point out how many writers of Jewish descent chose not to thematize their identity and at the same time make it seem as if it were a matter of only authorial choice.

Pressure (from the authorities and the Evsektsiia) to narrow the treatment of Jewish subjects in literature was so great that already in the late 1920s and 1930s writers in Yiddish began to censor themselves. Writers who were writing in Russian were also not encouraged to write on a subject that gave Jewish themes a preferential treatment.

> Hence, many of these writers endeavored to clear themselves, a priori, of any such suspicion, and much of the contempt for the Jewish past that was voiced in the Soviet Jewish literature of that period may be regarded as a preventive measure taken by writers to allay or absolve themselves of any possible charge of Jewish nationalism that might be or had already been laid against them. (Gilboa 98)

So we can see that writers who were clearly interested in Jewish issues, and who wrote in Yiddish were discouraged from injecting their works with anything that smacked of Jewish 'nationalism'. Writers of Jewish origin whose mother tongue was Russian had an even harder time explaining to the authorities why their subjects dealt with the Jewish question. It seems that the Soviet state precluded the publication of works even slightly

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[22] In the following quote Rita Genzeleva writes about Grossman's *Pravoye Delo* and counts how many times he uses the word Jew, "На пятистах пятидесяти страницах романа, где действуют еврейские персоннажи, где один из главных героев-еврей, переживающий гибель матери в оккупации, слово 'еврей' упомянуто всего семя раз, из них трижды- в контексте не имеющем отношения к войне и Катастрофе" (30). And this quote from Jewish Samizdat also lists all the writers who abstracted their ethnicity, and mentions that they did this because they no longer felt themselves to be Jews, "русская литература советского периода насчитывает множество имен писателей и поэтов еврейского происхождения, которые, судя по всему, вовсе перестали ощущать себя евреями. Во всяком случае в их творчестве почти не отразилось ни сознание своей связи с еврейством, ни сколько –нибудь отчетливое стремление порвать эту связь. Б. Пастернак, Ю. Тынянов, Вас. Гроссман, С. Маршак, В. Каверин, И. Сельвинский, П. Антокольский... При желании этот перечень имен можно продолжить." (7: 111)

tinged with a hint of nationalist issues. Writers were conditioned to completely abstract the Jewish issue even in their memoirs, led to believe from the beginning that such issues were not for the mainstream reading public. Already in the 1930s, Jewish themes became res non-grata in literature, Mark writes, "Simultaneously Yiddish literature was wrenched away from its entire historical past. Just as Jewish history was not studied at school, so Jewish history was not acknowledged in literature either" (235).

Writers whose works spoke at all to the question of their own nationality were constantly made to apologize for this natural (to ethnic writers) inclination in their works. Peretz Markish, one of the great Russian Yiddish writers, executed in 1952, wrote in the preface to his collected works an apologia for the tendency in his work to speak about his Jewish identity,

> They [poems] are, first and foremost, the failures of a cultural heritage from which we parted with difficulty, being called upon by the dictates of history to discard this national cultural burden in favor of the new socialist culture of the proletarian revolution….Apart from this, we were lured away from our course by the relics of decadence, which inevitably engendered [in us] a neutral individualism. This was only one step removed from nationalistic narrow-mindedness. (qtd. in Gilboa 125)

Markish, was one of the few writers to be allowed to deal with Jewish subjects, but like many writers before him, he needed to survive during the Stalinist regime, and survival at this time meant continuing to publish while staying within the prescribed borders of the acceptable. In this apologia, Markish, who needed to justify his poetry to the regime, uses Marxist rhetoric to explain why his choice of writing on Jewish themes ('failures of a cultural heritage', 'national cultural burden', 'nationalistic narrow-mindedness) was finally superseded by the only correct subject 'the new socialist culture of the proletarian revolution'.

Gilboa writes further that Markish was constantly warned that his literature was too soft on the Jewish past, that it spoke too much about identity, "He was charged with idealizing a life that was outmoded, reactionary, pious, patriarchal, whereas 'Markish might have been expected finally to discard his former nationalistic idols'" (125). Furthermore, so many demands were put on Markish that his works went from idealizing Jewish characters to depicting characters so skewed in the Soviet socialist manner that they became mere anti-Semitic caricatures (Gilboa 126). If Yiddishists' only recourse to being published was writing slanted Jewish characters who represented nothing of reality but were accepted by the censorship boards, then what to say about other Jewish writers who were not so close to their identity? To continue writing they extracted the question of identity wholesale from works. It is my contention that this conditioning of Soviet Jewish writers to extract any thematization of Jewish identity in their work led future generations' writers such as Aksyonov to have to completely relearn how to write a Jewish character without subscribing to anti-Semitic caricature.

Most visibly the relationship towards the Jews began to change when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty was signed in 1939. At that point all the information about Nazi atrocities in German-occupied territories was withheld from the Soviet public; writers who attempted to say anything negative about the USSR's Nazi allies were told that they had to change their narrative. Later on when Germany invaded the USSR Stalin allowed the formation of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the Soviet Union. Mikhoels, its leader and organizer, was allowed to travel outside of the country to agitate against Germany and WWII. Only after war was declared on Germany, in 1941, did the censorship let down a little. Ilya Ehrenburg, Sergei Eisenstein, Peretz Markish, Samuil Marshak, and David Bergelson were allowed to speak about being Jewish and to agitate on the behalf of the Jewish people (Blum A. 88). Stalin needed America's help to win the

war and one of the ways to do this was to allow prominent Russian Jews to travel to the US and campaign on the behalf of European Jews. But as soon as the tide turned and the Soviet Union began to win the war, the censorship machine clamped down again. In 1943, the media stopped documenting atrocities against Jews, publishing the numbers of Jews fighting or winning medals, and the Central Committee recommended limiting the number of Jews in the highest posts (Blum A. 89).

During the war Soviet cultural institutions began to clear their ranks of Jewish personnel. Kostyrchenko writes that Stalin's inner circle began to be preoccupied with the question of human resources in the arts, and a report from the Bureau of Propaganda and Agitation (Управление пропаганды и агитации ЦК ВКП(б)) detailed in a number of graphs and tables the Jewish members of the personnel of the Bolshoi Theater, Leningrad and Moscow Conservatories, and of a number of the leading newspapers. The report recommended that Russian personnel should take the leading positions at these organizations (Kostyrchenko 10-12).

At the end of WWII, Soviet authorities not only downplayed the Holocaust, but did not allow news of the German atrocities to be exposed in the media, at this point it was done not because of any affiliation with Germany but so as not to highlight the special suffering of the Jewish people during WWII.

> Тема Холокоста становится табуированной буквально на следующий день после победы: не то чтобы вообще запрещено было касаться ее в печати (это будет в переди!), но 'рекомендовано'- пресловутая анонимно-партийная формула 'есть мнение'-говорить об этом как можно меньше.
>
> The subject of the Holocaust was tabooed almost on the next day after the victory: it was not yet that it could not be touched on in print (this was in the future), but it was 'recommended'-- in the tepidly anonymous party formula of 'there's an opinion'-- to speak about it as seldom as possible." (Blum A. 92). (Blum A. 92)

In fact, the word Holocaust or Shoah never came into use in the former USSR precisely for these reasons.

Furthermore, Jewish participation in the Soviet army was also silenced and Soviet authorities in fact often claimed that Jews participated less than other ethnic groups or not at all. Popular proverbs such as 'Ivan saved Abram, but Abram went to hide out in Tashkent' proliferated, whereas in fact "about a half million Jews served in the Red Army, and the number of Jewish casualties reached 200,000. About 160,000 Jewish fighters were awarded medals, and 120 received the highest award possible, 'Hero of the Soviet Union'" (Gur-Gurevitz 139). Monuments which were erected to commemorate Jews brutally murdered on killing fields like Babi Yar never mentioned that it was Jews who were murdered there by the Nazis or their collaborators, and instead mentioned only slain people of the Soviet Union (Gur-Gurevitz 144).

The censorship of all print materials relating to the Jews began with the *Blackbook* collaboration between Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman that documented the atrocities of the Holocaust. Blum writes that the writers were accused of 'nationalism' (referring to a nascent Zionism) and highlighting of the Holocaust instead of showing that everyone suffered equally during the war (101). The *Blackbook* was not printed in the Soviet Union.

After WWII Yiddish publications were on their way out, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was dissolved in 1948, magazines and book publications also stopped being published after 1948 and the Yiddish theaters ceased to exist in 1949. While the first edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* printed a 54-page entry on "Jews" (in 1932), in 1952 that entry was reduced to just two pages (Gilboa 209). Although the Soviet Union was behind the creation of the State of Israel, when Israel began to accept financial and military support from the United States, and some 30,000 Jews showed up to welcome

Golda Meir in Moscow in October of 1948, the Soviet authorities feeling rebuffed, by the seemingly preferential treatment Soviet Jews were giving Israel, began to link the Russian Jews with the Israeli State, and the charge of 'rootless cosmopolitanism' began to be applied against the Soviet Jews.

It was in 1948 that Sofronov writing about Russian theater, began to call theater critics "rootless cosmopolitans" in connection to their criticism of Soviet plays. From then on the charge of "rootless cosmopolitanism" was extended to all the arts and sciences and carried with it accusations specifically against prominent cultural figures of Jewish origin. Furthermore, mirroring what had happened to Stalin's political opposition in the 1920s, newspapers began to print not only the names that these cultural figures were known by but also their original Jewish last names if they had changed them. The campaign again cosmopolitanism lasted from December 1948 to March 1949. In January 1949, Solomon Mikhoels, director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater, was bludgeoned to death and then run over by a car to stage an accident. Four years later his death was tied to the Doctor's Plot which accused Jewish doctors of planning to poison prominent Soviet leaders.

Soviet anti-Semitism continued to escalate at the highest levels. Between 1949 and 1950, 24 members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were arrested, and then executed in 1952. All of them were famous cultural figures, and notable among them were famous Yiddish poets and novelists including Itzak Feffer, Peretz Markish and Dovid Bergelson. The arrests were followed by bans on numerous books and other publications with Jewish themes in libraries and book stores,

> 15 июня 1949 разослан был по инстанциям 'приказ №620 об изъятии изданий, не подлежащих использованию в библиотеках общественного пользования и книготорговой сети', куда был включен состоявший

> примерно из 500 названий список сплошь ‘сионистских’ и ‘националистических’ еврейских книг на русском языке. (Blum A. 104)

The censored books included among them works on Jewish history and Zionism, journals, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and all works from the 1920s directed against Anti-semitism. GLAVLIT (Главное управление по делам литературы и издательств), the central censorship committee established in 1922, oversaw every single publication, stamp or advertisement. GLAVLIT satellites in the Soviet republics were responsible for carrying out the ban on printed material seized from libraries and bookstores and either destroying or banishing it to the “’книжный ГУЛАГ’- спецхраны нескольких крупнейших библиотек страны” /“the book GULAG, special collections of several of the largest libraries of the country” (Blum A. 105-106).

The purge of the Jewish cultural elite thus carried with it a parallel liquidation of all Jewish and especially Yiddish written culture. In 1948-1949, the proof of all Jewish publications and texts in the Soviet Union and Russia was destroyed; the government abolished all evidence of Jewish writing by removing Jewish writing from bookstores and public libraries, shutting down Jewish libraries, and banishing all other material “to a classified Spetsotdel (Special Section), to which the general public were denied access” (Gilboa 189). Purges in major Soviet cities were followed by more distant places including the Autonomous Jewish Republic of Birobidzhan (established by Stalin in 1934 to arguably provide the Jews with their own territory),

> Birobidzhan had been proud of its Sholem Aleichem Library, which in 1947-48 had run to 130,000 volumes, including some 30,000 Jewish works. The library contained a rich collection of Judaica in various languages, including a considerable number of works in Hebrew. Practically the entire collection of Jewish works, or those dealing with Jewish subjects, was destroyed in the liquidation operations. (Gilboa 194)

With the severing of the head from the body, Soviet Jewish masses were completely disassociated from their historical, ethnic and religious heritage[23]. This look at the publication and dissemination history of Jewish print material illustrates the point I will continue to make in this chapter and the next when I examine Aksyonov's work: Soviet Jewish writers had almost no contact with literary Jewish culture: therefore different standards of measurement should be applied to judge their contribution to Jewish literary canons.

Stalin's anti-Semitic scythe did not stop at its own frontiers. Following the execution of its cultural figures Moscow directed its gaze towards Czechoslovakia. The Prague Trials in 1952 purged 14 members of the top ranks of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 11 of who were Jewish. Gilboa notes on the Prague Trial of 20-27 November 1952, "Throughout the trial, an obvious trend was apparent to present the Jewish origin as a character trait creating a predisposition to deception and treachery, as if there were a natural link between the defendants' Judaism and their crimes" (263). The Czechoslovak Communists were accused of working together with Israeli and US intelligence networks. The Soviet regime saw spies everywhere but most obviously in the Jews who were deemed not loyal enough to their respective motherlands.

In 1952 during the so-called Kiev Affair (a political trial motivated by economic crimes), three embezzlers were sentenced to death, and others imprisoned; those who received the death sentence were Jewish (Gilboa 284). Among the final machinations of

[23] There are numerous references to this period by a number of critics, Averbukh writes, "In the late forties, during the 'anticosmopolitan' campaign when the entire Soviet press seemed preoccupied only with furiously 'exposing' hidden Jewish motifs in the works of Jewish writers, finding 'nationalism even when there was no trace of it…"(Ro'I and Beker 82). And along the same lines, Blum notes how book publication was halted if characters had a Jewish background, "Из романов, печатавшихся в тогдашних журналах , стали спешно изымать героев с еврейскими фамилиями, а когда они занимали в повествовании слишком много места, запрещали произведения целиком или хотя бы на половину. Так, например, именно на середине была публикация оборвана повести Юрия Германа *Подполковник Медицинской Службы*, героем которой был военный врач Левин. " (Blum A. 111)

Stalin's Kremlin was the purge of prominent Jewish doctors. In January 1953, many of the medical elite were arrested on trumped-up charges and had Stalin not died a few months later it is certain that they would have been executed. Yet, the campaign against the prominent doctors affected many Russian Jews in their daily interactions with those around them. Larissa Miller a writer whose husband was an associate of Andrei Sakharov writes,

> In 1953 I was in the 7th form at school. Of the three rows of desks in the classroom I occupied one whole row by myself. The other girls used to cram themselves three to a desk in the other two rows. As the only Jewish girl in the class I was ostracized as punishment for "The Jewish Doctors' Plot". During the breaks they would surround me and push me about like a ball. (139)

Following the "Jewish Doctor's Plot" in 1953 all books by the arrested Jewish doctors were banned from libraries and book stores. They were rehabilitated only in 1956[24].

The ranks of Soviet Jewish writers had therefore thinned considerably between the 1920s and the 1950s. Gilboa writes that in the period between 1936 and 1940 there were almost 800 Jewish writers, whereas a list compiled in 1956 whittled that number down to 81, indicating that a significant number had been arrested in the anti-Jewish purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s (199). In 1954, "at the Second Conference of Soviet writers; 250 of the participants were Russian, 72 were Jewish, and 71 were Ukrainian" (Gur-Gurevitz 199). But during Stalin's last years, Soviet Jewish readers had no access to literature with Jewish content. The only memoir with a Jewish theme that came out in the period between the end of WWII and Stalin's death was Aleksei Svirskii's History of My Life (1947).

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[24] Gur-Gurevitz notes that notwithstanding the Doctors' Plot, "young Jews continued to view their future in a medical career, and during the sixties doctors constituted close to a quarter of all Jewish academic breadwinners" (199). In the Ginzburg family as well, Aksyonov's parents decided that the medical profession would be the safest for the boy, since, as Ginzburg had learned through her own experience of working as a nurse, doctors and nurses had an easier time surviving the GULAGs than members of any other profession.

Under Nikita Khrushchev the government's relationship towards the Jewish population was constantly fluctuating. In 1955, the government allowed publications by murdered Jewish writers of 1952 to be released, including works by Peretz Markish and Itzik Fefer, as well as concerts by Jewish musicians who sang in Yiddish to be staged (Gur-Gurevitz 206). Yet A. Blum writes that Einstein's books were banned in the Soviet Union starting in 1954, with the censors citing his positive views on Zionism (119). Ehrenburg's *People, Years, Life* came out in 1960-1965, and Babel's works were reprinted in 1957. Although the government released the works of Jewish writers who were posthumously rehabilitated in 1956, the Yiddish-language publications were not among those lists. There were no publications in Yiddish until 1959 when books came out by Mendele-Mocher Sforim, Peretz and Sholem Aleichem. In 1958-1960, the collected works of Gorky excluded all of his essays on Jews and anti-Semitism.

"Babii Yar", the poem by Evtushenko that was published during 'the Thaw' had a colorful history, since Evtushenko was not the first to write a poem by that name. In fact, Ehrenburg wrote a poem of the same title in 1944 and so did Lev Ozerov in 1946. As of 1948 the story of the killing grounds outside of Kiev was banned, "О Бабьем Яре приказано было молчать, начиная с 1948г, вместе с развязанной тогда антисемитской компанией" (Blum A. 125). Although Evtushenko's poem was published in 1961, it was subsequently not reprinted (the Holocaust remained a taboo theme) and secret circulars following the publication of the poem asked the censors at GLAVLIT to be more careful with their choice of publications on Jewish themes (Blum A. 126). Furthermore, the memoirs of Ehrenburg were censored and de-Judaized, with all questions about the sufferings of the Jews under the Nazis taken out. The same treatment was given to a collection of poems by Boris Slutskii, out of which was excised the poem "Как Убивали Мою Бабку" ("How They Killed My Grannie") (Blum A. 129-130).

Although Khrushchev briefly allowed anti-Stalinist publications until 1964 (the period before the coup turned on his own uncharacteristic liberalism), after he was overthrown the censorship of Jewish themes became even more enforced. Between 1966 and 1967, Jewish-themed movies like *The Commissar* (based on a Grossman short story) and *Intervention* were banned from release for 20 years (Blum A. 136). After the Six Day War was over, one hundred Anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic books were published in the Soviet Union (Blum A. 137). Blum notes that from 1967-1972, all print publications considered in the least bit Zionist were banned. "напомним что под ними понимались все без исключения печатные издания, имеющие хоть какое-то отношение к еврейской тематике" (Blum A. 139-140). The ban extended to publications on the early Zionists, and all publications by Jews who had emigrated to Israel or the US were banned whether they were children's book writers or professors of law. "Очевидно, самое упоминание в названиях слов еврей, еврейский служило основанием для изъятия книги [...]" (Blum A. 140) At the same time, according to an article in the Jewish Samizdat, almost inexplicably works by Sholem Asch were published in 1966 and Sholem Aleichem's works came out in 1971 (13: 11).

On the other hand there was also a campaign that tied Jews to economic corruption. Gur-Gurevitz states that because of the nature of the professions that Jews in the Soviet Union chose they were disproportionately singled out to make an example of corruption. In 1961, Khrushchev enacted a law that meted out the death penalty for large-scale economic corruption, which resulted in 117 executions. Of those given the death penalty 91 were Jewish. "In Russia 25 were executed of whom 22 were Jews, which is 88%. Ukraine was the worst of all, with 39 Jews of the 44 executed, which was 89%" (Gur-Gurevitz 204). Furthermore, these crimes and executions were accompanied by

denunciations of Jews in mainstream newspapers which were tied to the historic myth of the Jewish obsession with money.

During the 1950s and 1960s the number of Jews entering institutions of higher education was limited to 3%. While Gur-Gurevitz notes that there was no government mandated policy of numerus clausus such a policy was in fact implicit (210). Whereas in 1956 the percentage of Jews in colleges and universities was over 4%, in 1970 that number had fallen to just over 2% (211). Sakharov, the Nobel Prize-winning dissident and Soviet physicist attempted to take an exam given to a Jewish high school student seeking to enter Moscow State University, he writes:

> I chose one of the problems on the list. Of course, the student taking the examination is not allowed to choose the particular problem he wished to solve. I found a very pretty solution to my problem, but it required a nontrivial and ingenious argument, and it took me much more than one hour. Moreover, I was able to work quietly at home. I needed to use my considerable experience solving these difficult mathematical problems as well as my large store of mathematical knowledge. (qtd. in Kagedan 4)

Sakharov pointed out that the problems posed to Jewish students, by the Soviet educational authorities, were far beyond the abilities of leading scientists to complete in the allotted time.

In an article published in the underground Jewish Samizdat, called "The Social Prerequisites of the National Awakening of the Jews" ("Социальные предпосылки национального пробуждения евреев") by A. Voronel, the author (a noted Russian Jewish scientist), explains that a majority of Russian Jews began to awaken to the call of their nationality after the 1950s for two reasons, the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel (4: 3). But on another level the reawakening began because the Russian Jews who had been previously induced not to consider their nationality found that in the 1950s the Soviet regime began to limit them

more than ever before by creating obstacles for their education which had become extremely important to Jews. Furthermore Russian Jews who were interested in a reawakening of their ethnicity for the reasons provided above found in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that they had no means through which to find a national identity, no history books they could read, no literature that was specifically Jewish, no music etc.

> Нет не только никаких изданий, посвященных, например истории евреев, но даже из учебников истории древнего мира, начиная с пятидесятых годов, исключены главы, повествующие о Иудее и Израиле.
>
> Несмотря на богатые театральные и музыкальные традиции, случаи с выступлений артистов с еврейской программой за последние годы можно сосчитать по пальцам. Никакой живой еврейской литературы (тем более на русском языке на котором говорит более 80% евреев) нет, несмотря на то, что в Союзе писателей состоит около тысячи писателей-евреев. Большая часть еврейской художественной интеллигенции занята интерпретацией и популяризацией достижений русской и других национальных культур. (Jewish Samizdat 4: 12)

Voronel makes the point that notwithstanding the great numbers of Jewish writers in the Union of Writers, almost no one in the 1970s wrote about Jewish identity. So in other words, while critics who are writing about Jewish literature claim that Russian writers of Jewish origin who did not write about their identity may not be called Jewish authors, it is useful to point out that those who wrote about their identity barely existed during this period. As Voronel notes, these writers, who made up almost a thousand members of the Union of Writers, wrote about everything but Jewish questions. Therefore, it seems evident to state that Soviet Jewish writers who did not thematize their identity in their works make up the rule and not the exception to the make-up of ethnically Jewish writers.

The beginning of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union, as well as the reappearance of a more public Jewish identity, goes back to Israel's Six Day War in 1967. When Israel won the war against the Arab countries, which were supplied with weapons and supported by the Soviet Union, the rhetoric of the Soviet Union began to tie Zionism to Nazism, and to vilify the state of Israel in a number of different ways. As the direct result of this negative anti-Israeli and subsequently anti-Jewish rhetoric that appeared in the Soviet media that anti-Semitism also rose and that the sympathies of the Soviet Jews began to side with the state of Israel. Many Jews, feeling that there was no longer any future for them in the Soviet Union, began to send letters to the Supreme Soviet asking for leave to emigrate. This period, under Brezhnev's regime was again a more repressive time in Soviet history; in the history of Soviet Jews this time was fraught with danger as many were arrested and sentenced to hard labor for their wish to emigrate, and many others lost their jobs; their lives, as well as those of their family members, became much harder.

Especially prominent at this time were the Leningrad Trials of 1971, featuring mostly Soviet Jewish dissidents whose plot of hijacking a plane in order to emigrate out of the Soviet Union was discovered. Two of the dissidents were given the death penalty which was later commuted to several years of hard labor. While many Jews were allowed to emigrate to Israel, just as many were denied their applications and became refuseniks. The Soviet authorities justified denying visas by explaining that the state could not afford to lose a great number of Soviet educated professionals and that it was only interested in letting out the old and the infirm, those who could not contribute to the well-being of their country. In 1972, the government added another policy: Soviet Jews would have to repay their government-funded education before leaving, yet because this policy was damaging the USSR's relations with the US, it was repealed in 1973. While Soviet and

US relations were stable in the 1970s, a large number of Jews were allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union, but when this relationship soured again in the early 1980s the numbers decreased rapidly. In 1980 around 21,000 Jews were allowed to emigrate, yet in 1986 that number went down to roughly 900 (Gur-Gurevitz 264).

In the late 1970s, the refuseniks began to organize into a group of activists to protest the regime and the policies which did not allow all the Jews applying for exit visas to emigrate. An article entitled "Преследования евреев в связи с визитом Никсона" or "The Persecution of Jews in Connection to Nixon's Visit" in Jewish Samizdat details the lengths to which the Soviet government went to repress Jews who tried to immigrate to Israel in the 1970s. In 1972 numerous Jews were arrested, forced to seek medical help and visit psychiatrists, or were even interred in psychiatric hospitals to seek help because of their wish to leave the country. A number of others had to be retrained by the army. Furthermore, Jews who lost their jobs because of their interest in emigrating could be convicted under the labor law 'законодательство в области борьбы с лицами, уклоняющимися от общественнополезного труда и ведущими антиобщественный паразитический вид жизни' ('The law in the sphere of fighting with figures evading communal work and leading an anti-communal or parasitic way of life') or parasitism, the poet Joseph Brodsky was one example of a cultural figure sentenced under this law.

Anti-Semitism in the1970s was expressed in the form of a fight against Zionism. Posters warning "Caution, Zionism" announced that hidden forces of Zionism prevailed among the population, and numerous brochures were published on the evils of Zionism and on the connection of Zionism to imperialism (Jewish Samizdat 10: 155). Gal Beckerman writes,

> A Jew in Leningrad or Moscow in 1964 thought of himself as a Jew simply because an anti-Semite said he was or because the state made him declare it every time he had to show his passport. But it did not mean much else to him. Jewish boys were not circumcised. Bar mitzvahs were nonexistent. There was no legal way to teach Hebrew…
>
> Jewishness was a negative identity, a reminder of avenues that were closed. Being Jewish meant that there were certain universities one couldn't hope to attend, certain jobs that were for all practical purposes forbidden. Being Jewish was a natural disadvantage, a handicap, like being born deaf or missing a limb, and it meant you would just have to work harder to overcome it. The Jew of this generation growing up in a big Soviet city had a different culture: Russian. The books he loved were Russian and the only language he knew was Pushkin's. (95)

In 1977, Soviet television released the documentary *Traders of Souls* about the Jewish immigration to Israel. This film confirmed many anti-Zionist stereotypes and at the same time maintained that all Jews who wanted to emigrate were allowed to do so (Gur-Gurevitz 304). Following the release of the film a number of refuseniks who publicly protested its libel began to be persecuted by the state and the media. Furthermore, accusations by another refusenik that a number of the prominent dissidents were actually working for foreign secret service agencies led to arrests and charges of espionage against a number of refusenik activists (306). In the early 1980s, the government began to take an even harsher stance towards the refusenik activists. Many received prison terms, the charges for which were always varied: slandering the Soviet government, parasitism, hooliganism, organizing group activities etc.

OUTSIDE THE WHIRLWIND

From her memoirs and conversations with friends it is safe to assume that Ginzburg was not directly interested in Jewish subjects, even though she never denied being Jewish, in her work and life she distanced herself from the bourgeois Jewish background she had come from. There is reason to assume that she was interested in Jewish themes, but that her love for them was always mixed with her own Christian

beliefs. Raisa Orlova, a Jewish writer married to Lev Kopelev, GULAG survivor, Jewish writer and dissident, prototype for Rubin a protagonist of Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, mentions that when she came to Ginzburg's house, the latter had two pictures on the wall, of the Madonna and of Pasternak. This is an interesting combination, since both were Jews, yet known as non-Jews. Her choice of wall hangings evokes her combined love of Catholicism and the literary world. Nevertheless it lends itself to an ethnic interpretation as well.

Along the same lines, Kopelev writes that the *Young Guard* journal had once asked Ginzburg to write for one of their series; "She named a few names, in that number, the forgotten poetess Mirra Lokhvitskaya. It is possible, that the poems of Lokhvistkaya together with Nadson, are also in the fountainhead of her own poetic experiments" (Kopelev and Orlova 857). Kopelev, after all, does think that Ginzburg was possibly influenced by other Jews, even if she did not want to admit it. He mentions an anthology about Jews published in Israel that had included the Ginzburg poem written to her cell mate, "And again like grown white Jews" (the full poem is provided in the previous chapter), that had compared their own sufferings to the wandering Jews, who with hope in their hearts, long to spend the next year in Jerusalem (this poet is reproduced earlier in this chapter),

> She composed this poem on the eve of the new 1938 year in the Yaroslavl prison. She read it to her cellmate. Jerusalem was the agreed upon symbol of freedom. She was happy at its publication, showed the anthology to friends and acquaintances. And was surprised, that the publishers of the collection, seemingly, took at face value, what to her was just a poetic metaphor. (Kopelev and Orlova 857)

Ginzburg thought it was strange that anyone could take her poem about 'tortured, exiled' Jews literally, instead of with the symbolic weight that she had imparted on Biblical metaphor in order to make the plight of the innocently accused more stark. Yet her choice

of subject matter, Jewish slavery in Egypt, suggests that her ethnic background was the only close comparison to her situation as a slave of the Soviet system.

Ginzburg, like the other writers examined in this thesis, collaborated with other Jews (primarily with her son Aksyonov) and was friends with other Jews, her friendship with Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova is the most obvious example. Kopelev and Orlova detail Ginzburg's association with other members of the Soviet Jewish community. This collaboration with the greater Jewish community is an intrinsic part of Memmi's *Portrait of the Jew* (addressed in the introductory chapter), in which he details that friendships, ties and relationships between Jews are one construction of a Jewish identity. Gur-Gurevitz notes on the results of a survey conducted in 1981 by Professor Benjamin Fain of Soviet Jews who had not yet attempted to leave the Soviet Union, the findings showed that "About 50% of the respondents claimed that they were in close social contact with other Jews…" (337). This shows that most Jews in the Soviet Union who could not practice their religion or express their ethnic identity in any way practiced their cultural identity by remaining in close contact with other Jews.

Nevertheless, Ginzburg's memoir constantly speaks about her connection to and love of Russian culture. Like Clarice Lispector and Moss Hart, in Brazil and the US respectively, she demonstrated a passion for the language and literature of the dominant culture. Clarice felt compelled to master the Portuguese language as a way of proving her Brazilian identity. Hart in his teens and lacking a school education memorized, and recited English-language novels in order to impress non-Jewish kids and lose his status as an outsider. In one example from Ginzburg's life that bears comparison, she memorized Eugene Onegin and recited it to other prisoners traveling by train to a GULAG. This action established Ginzburg as an authority on Russian literature among the other prisoners. Numerous other facts in her life point to a predilection for Russian literature

and culture as a new religion for Ginzburg, even though she converted to Catholicism the highest ideal for Ginzburg in her memoir remains Russian culture and Russian literature. This giddy exhilaration with Russian culture is felt throughout her text and is a natural connection with her son Aksyonov. When she reunites with him after many years of imprisonment their mutual love of poetry is the tie that binds them beyond any biological force,

> Я захлебывалась от радостного изумления, когда он в ту же первую ночь стал читать мне наизусть те самые стихи с которыми я жила, погибала и снова жила все эти годы. Так же как я, он находил в поэзии опору против жестокости реального мира. Она- поэзия была формой его сопротивления. В той первой ночной беседе с нами были и Блок, и Пастернак, и Ахматова.[. . .] 'Теперь я понимаю, что такое мать...' [. . .] 'Мать это прежде всего же корыстные чувства. И еще... Еще вот что: ей можно читать свои любимые стихи, а если остановишься, она продолжит с прерванной строчки.'
>
> I was engulfed by joyous amazement, when during the first night he started to read to me the same poems with which I lived, perished, lived again in those years. Like me, he found in poetry a strength against the cruelty of the real world. She—poetry was his form of struggle. During that first night conversation Block, Pasternak and Akhmatova were with us. [. . .]'Now I understand, what a mother is…' [. . .] 'A mother is first of all selfless. But also… There is this: you can read toyou're your favorite poems, and if you stop, she will finish it for you.'(2007 Ginzburg 660)

After her release Ginzburg did not wish to teach history instead she took a job as a teacher of Russian language and literature. Kolchevska writes,

> For its author, reordering her experience into a document about a fallen culture, namely, Russian culture, enables Ginzburg to inscribe herself into the one community—the intelligentsia—that can give meaning to the chaos created by the Stalinist state. [. . .]This explains the polarity that Ginzburg establishes between the unpredictability and illogic of the world of arrests, Gulags, and denunciations, and the continuity and meaning that she finds in Russian, and to a lesser extent, Western European culture. ("The Art of Memory" 153)
>
> The canonical points that justify her own claim to literary (and social) authority, however, reside in classical, prerevolutionary Russian poetry, in Pushkin and in

> Blok, and in the paragons of post-Stalinist dissident culture: Pasternak, Mandelstam, Akhmatova. ("The Art of Memory" 155)

As was shown in the previous section, in the early days of the former USSR the state's prerogative was to assimilate the Jewish population. Contact with Jewish culture was withheld gradually from the beginning of the Communist regime and more forcefully during and after World War II. Henceforth, the state's prerogative was for Russification, the Communist Party decreeing that assimilation was the best way to integrate Jews into society.

Evgenia Ginzburg, along with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Varlam Shalamov, was one of the most influential writers to describe from first-hand experience the Stalinist Gulags. Her choice of genre was also unique: while Solzhenitsyn's works are considered works of fiction and Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* are a combination of memoir and fiction, Ginzburg's *Крутой Маршрут* (*Into the Whirlwind*) was purely a memoir. Kolchevska describes the difference between Ginzburg's work and Solzhenitsyn's:

> Rather than relate a case history of one exemplary figure's trek through the Stalinist camps, to have, as it were, one speak for the many, Whirlwind is emphatically one woman speaking as one of the many. While Solzhenitsyn's Ivan Denisovich marshals all of his efforts to preserve the unitary self, Ginzburg's strategies are interwoven with, and indivisible from, her relations with the women and men who share her life in camp and exile. ("The Art of Memory" 150)

Even though Ginzburg is writing a work of non-fiction, her goal is not to provide a personal history but a GULAG history and this choice allows her to deemphasize her own identity. In any case, given the anti-Semitism and censorship in the Soviet Union, as outlined in the previous history section, Ginzburg was limited in how she could approach the subject of Jewish identity, if she had any desire to see the work published in the Soviet Union.

In the late 1960s, Ginzburg had a recorded conversation with Roy Medvedev, the Russian-Jewish historian and one of the two most famous dissidents along with Sakharov, who wrote a pioneering book on Stalin and his crimes published in English in 1972 under the name *Let History Judge*. The conversation was about Aleksandr Tvardovskii, the poet and editor of Novyi Mir who was the first to publish Sozhenitsyn's *One Day In the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and therefore was thought of as the only openly liberal editor (of course to do this he received Khrushchev's approval first). Responding to why she thought Tvardoskii would not publish her memoir (*Into the Whirlwind* was rejected by Novyi Mir and circulated in samizdat form through the 1960s and 1970s, until it was finally published in English in 1967) and other short stories, Medvedev recounts, "she said that Tvardovskii probably did not like her Jewish surname" (Medvedev 622). Medvedev goes on to defend Tvardovskii's decision, arguing that Tvardovskii, the child of kulaks who were sent to Siberia, could have been concerned that the labor camp writers were more often writing about the fate of the intelligentsia than the peasants, whose situation was very hard. However, Medvedev does make the case that even though Tvardovskii was not responsible for preventing the publication of Jewish authors in his magazine, this was a common enough occurrence in the publishing field. He says,

> Of course, I saw and understood that Tvardovskii was never an anti-Semite, of which he was accused by some offended writers who could not publish their articles, stories or novels in Novyi Mir…Even then, when I was still working in the responsible position of assistant to the chief editor of Prosveshchenie, at certain policy-making meetings of the administration of the Communist Party's Central Committee, I heard reproaches that our publishing plans included too many Jewish names. In order for these plans to be ratified, we had to cut the number of Jewish writers by a third (Medvedev 622).

Ginzburg was not the only one to suspect that Tvardovskii found it easier to publish authors whose works did not cater to Jewish ethnicity[25]. In 1949, Vasilii Grossman finished his novel *In a Just Cause* and submitted it to Tvardovskii. The latter responded with three principal critiques of this war novel about Stalingrad: it was too realistic, there was not enough about Stalin and, finally, there was too much about Jews. Tvardovskii pleaded with Grossman to change his protagonists' profession from that of a major physicist to "начальник[ом] военторга". Most of the criticism that the novel received prior to its publication dealt with the nationality of its protagonist Shtrum. Grossman was advised to, among other things, make Shtrum a less important character "Штрум отодвигается на задний план, у Штрума должен быть учитель, гораздо более крупный физик, русский по национальности" /"Shtrum should be moved to the background, Shtrum should have a teacher, a much greater physicist, Russian by nationality" (РЦХИДНИ qtd. in Blum A. 107). Further discussions about the novel in government circulars constantly brought up the non-Russian ethnicity of the protagonist (Blum A. 108).

Into the Whirlwind brings us into the beginning of Ginzburg's penal journey through countless trials and interrogations conducted on baseless charges, and ends with her rehabilitation. Outside of these events the personal history of her life, prior to her personal life in the Gulags and afterward, plays no role in the memoirs. Ginzburg was writing her memoirs after Stalin's death but while anti-Semitism was still part of the unofficial party doctrine. The memoir which circulated in samizdat from the beginning of

[25] In 1961, Grossman gave *Novvi Mir* his *Путевые Заметки Пожилого Человека (The Travel Notes of an Elderly Person)*, which was again censored. Tvardovskii disagreed with Grossman on a paragraph that detailed the author's experience with Anti-semitism in Armenia during his travels. A. Blum quotes one of the editors of Novvi Mir, E. Kondratovich, "Твардовский ни при каких условиях не может согласиться с утверждением Гроссмана о якобы широко распространенных явлениях антисемитизма, о чем говорилось на армянской свадьбе, автор Гроссман проводит прямо свою мысль" (124-125).

the 1960s was published in 1967 outside of the Soviet Union. In fact, there was a different version of the memoir, entitled *Under Lucifer's Wing*, it was a bitter expose of the camps, Ginzburg burned it, it is possible that that version contained some of the details that appear as negative space in the published version.

Family relationships are key to literary inheritance. The Lispectors had their father's Yiddish world and Moss Hart his grandfather's literary leanings. Evgenia Ginzburg spends very little time discussing her parents. Just as Ginzburg attempts to create a sui generis family in the GULAG, she silences her Jewish identity by eliminating all references to her actual Jewish family and, in fact, identifies with the Russian family of her mother-in-law. This is similar to Clarice's evasion of the story of her family's immigration and its links to Jewish culture. Ginzburg's focus on the Russian peasant is reminiscent of Lispector's transferring of identity to the struggles of the marginal classes of Brazil.

Ginzburg's treatment of her mother-in-law is a striking example of her attempt to create a Russian genealogy for herself,

> Моя свекровь Авдотья Васильевна Аксенова, родившаяся еще при крепостном праве, простая неграмотная "баба рязанская", отличалась глубоким философским складом ума и поразительной способностью по-писательски метко, почти афористично выражать свои мнения по самым разнообразным вопросам жизни. Говорила она на певучем южнорусском наречии, щедро уснащая свою речь пословицами и поговорками. (1967 Ginzburg 29)

> My mother-in-law Avdotia Vasilievna Aksyonova, born when serfdom was still the rule of the land, a simple illiterate "woman of Ryazan", distinguished herself by her deeply philosophical mind and her striking ability to give her opinions as directly as a writer, almost aphoristically on the most diverse questions of life. She spoke with a sing-song southern Russian intonation, generously peppering her speech with proverbs and sayings. (1967 Ginzburg 29)

She writes about her mother-in-law as a woman who rightfully belonged in Russia, a real peasant, born during the existence of serfdom and an illiterate. The length to which she goes to detail her mother-in-law's biography and focus on the Russian-ness of the woman's story, though, can be seen as a way to tie herself to this woman's history and create for herself a legitimate background and a surrogate Russian family tree (even after her life in the camps exposed the negative construct of the Soviet ideals, it seems she continued to prefer a lower-class background to her own bourgeois childhood). She writes also, that Aksyonov's mother was wise like King Solomon, using a famous Biblical figure to explain and define the wisdom of this Russian woman. Her mother-in-law was the only person whose peasant shrewdness allowed her to identify where the Soviet regime was headed and to warn Ginzburg to move to another part of the country or to her village to hide from the possibility of an arrest. In the meantime, Ginzburg never discusses her own family background, her parents' jobs, or any other identifying characteristics.

Orlova, in her reminiscences about the post-Stalin period, writes that Ginzburg's physical appearance and speech were closer to those of the regular Russian people,

> В ее лице—в мягко, но широко развернутых скулах, в разрезе глаз, и татарские, и российски-простонародные черты. Этим она по сестрински походила на Фриду,-отсветы давних событий истории в лицах русско-еврейских интеллигенток.
>
> Однажды я видела как она разговаривает с татарской крестьянкой. Обе круглолицые, скуластые, пригожие. И говор у обоих округлый, мягкий. Резко отличный от того средне-интеллигентского языка, который обычно звучит вокруг нас. (834)
>
> In her face, in the soft, but widely opened cheekbones, in the slit of the eyes, [one can see] the Tatar, and the characteristics of the Russian folk. In this face, an almost sisterly resemblance to Frida [Vigdorova]: the reflection of long ago historical events in the faces of Russian-Jewish female intellectuals.

> Once I saw her talking to a Tatar peasant, both were round-faced, high-cheekboned, clean looking. And their speech was rounded, soft, sharply distinct from that mid-intelligentsia tongue often heard around us. (Kopelev and Orlova 834)

Orlova also notes that while she spoke like a Russian, she looked like another Jewish woman who looked like a Tatar. Orlova (who met Ginzburg after the latter's incarcerations) specifically notes that the intonations and accent of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia were different from that of the masses, yet Ginzburg was able to speak as if she had never been in contact with the Jewish community. Yet in the 1920s and 1930s Ginzburg was in the minority of Jews whose native language was Russian. Altshuler writes,

> In the 1926 census 72.6% of all Soviet Jews declared a Jewish language as their native tongue; this figure dropped to 41% in the 1939 census. The annihilation of most shtetl-raised Jews during the Holocaust and the complete liquidation of Jewish cultural activity in the late 1940s caused the number of Jews who used or knew a Jewish tongue to decrease further. Declaration of a Jewish native tongue thus began to acquire an increasingly subjective-psychological significance; at the same time, it became a deliberate means of expressing Jewish nationality. (180)

Ginzburg's case was an exception to the rule; while most of the other Jews in the Soviet Union still spoke a Jewish language, in her assimilated family she spoke Russian. Losing Yiddish as their primary language became for Russian Jews the first step on the path to full assimilation.

In addition, Ginzburg's place of residence, Kazan, also suggests that her parents were assimilated Jews. In the 1930s there were only a few thousand Jews in Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan. Altshuler writes "As for the Tatar ASSR, the 1939 census found 6,000 Jews (0.2% of the population)" (Altshuler 93). Furthermore, the level of education and therefore rate of assimilation of Ginzburg's family was probably elevated just by being removed from the major Jewish population centers, "The 1939 data

show that the percentage of Jews whose education exceeded seven years was higher in areas to which Jews tended to immigrate (the RSFSR, Azerbaidzhan) than it was in their historical areas of residence" (Altshuler 105). Altshuler shows that the level of education of Jews in urban areas was almost twice that of their counterparts in Ukraine and Byelorussia (105).

Orlova suggests that Ginzburg's predilection for 'real Russians' was not in any way a pose when she recounts Ginzburg's own thoughts about her preferred origins,

"Если верить в переселение душ, то я в прошлой жизни была деревенской бабой."/

"If one can believe in the reincarnation of souls, then in my past life I was a peasant woman [she said]" (Kopelev and Orlova 835). It would be hard to analyze Ginzburg's words and not notice her sincerity. She talks about her association with peasants, at a time when people no longer sought to profit from the renunciation of a bourgeois upbringing. At the time she is no longer a devoted Communist; she sees the many problems of the party and ridicules Western leftists who think that something good can still come of worldwide Communism (Kopelev and Orlova). Ginzburg's thoughts here are notable in as much as she constantly dissociates herself from Jews and Judaism.

Lev Kopelev writes that,

> Она не только не чувствовала, не сознавала себя еврейкой, но даже говорила: --У меня никогда не было и не могло быть романа с евреем. Потому и в вас Левочка я влюбиться не могла бы... –Женечка вы просто антесимитка, расистка.
>
> She not only did not feel, but even acknowledge that she was a Jew. She even said, 'I have never had nor could I have an affair with a Jew. Because even with you Levochka, I would not be able to fall in love…' to which he answered, 'Zhenichka, you are simply an anti-Semite, a racist.' (2007 Ginzburg 857).

Even though Kopelev, it seems, said that in jest, Ginzburg's presumption of falling in love with someone or not based on the question of ethnicity, especially an ethnicity

shared by her yet somehow never accepted, could suggest a sort of unfounded prejudice. In another article in Jewish Samizdat "Who am I" which discusses the sociology and psychology of Soviet Jewish intellectuals and their relationship to each other, Lubov writes,

> Первое соотнесение приводит его к пониманию своего еврейства только как изгойства, второе- к представлению о других евреях, как чужеродных ему субъектах. Поэтому в отношении к себе подобным он также оказывается в двойственной ситуации: как объект изгойства видит и в них больше изгоев вообще, чем евреев конкретно, по существу же как объект того же процесса отчуждается от них, отчуждает их от себя, и участвует в их выталкивания из среды, с которой себя отождествляет. Не случайно многие советские евреи-интеллигенты с готовностью отождествляют себя с другими евреями, как абстрактной массой изгоев, но испытывают антипатию к тем же своим соплеменникам в конкретной массе, к 'евреям в больших количествах', т.е. в виде национального типа. (6: 158)

Like the typology of the Russian Jew that Lubov describes in this article, Ginzburg also saw Jewishness in terms of an alien culture, removed from her own experience, almost as if she believed that Jews were distinct in physical makeup from her. Liubov, in fact describes the precise form of Jewish self-hatred that Gilman defined in his work and which was discussed in the introductory chapter.

In contrast to Ginzburg's description of her mother-in-law and the Russian physical appearance and speech noted by her contemporaries, she devotes very little attention to her mother, or to her father, who was notably named Solomon, considering that she chose King Solomon as the biblical figure stand-in for her mother-in-law. She does often say how she did not get a chance to say goodbye to her mother, and how she would never see her again. However, she does not provide a description of her parents with any level of detail. The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet Literature notes that "Her parents were Jewish but did not practice the religion (according to Vasilii Aksyonov). Her father was a pharmacist" (Heldt 165). When Ginzburg describes being

arrested, she mentions her mother but nothing about her father. The reader must wait until her father dies to learn about the character of her parents whom she says she loved dearly. About her father, she notes:

> Не было ближе и роднее его до моих восьми лет. Потом долгие годы отчуждения, взаимных болей, бед, обид. Мне не нравилось "социальное происхождение", завидовала подругам, у которых был "папа от станка". Ему не нравилось многое в моей жизни и поведении.
>
> No one was closer or dearer to me than him, until I was eight. Then there were many years of alienation, mutual pain, misfortune, grievances. I did not like the 'social origins', was envious of my friends whose fathers were from the 'machine bench'. He did not like a lot about my life and attitude. (1990 Ginzburg 158)

Ginzburg freely admits that she dreamed of different social origins, yet since her family's education and other cultural specificities were necessarily tied to their Jewish origins, it seems that she not only wished that they were of the proletariat but possibly that they were also Russians.

Voronel notes that the Soviet government alone was not responsible for the loss of Jewish identity; rather Jews themselves were partially to blame for believing the theory that the most important factor in life was social origins,

> В тех грандиозных преобразованиях, которые происходили в 20-е и 30-е годы, у слишком многих, к сожалению, возникло ошибочное убеждение, что человеческая психология формируется из немногих прос тых компонентов, и социальный фактор в этом формировании-рещающий. (*Jewish Samizdat* 4: 13)

In fact, Ginzburg perfectly fits this prototype of the Jew educated in the 1920s and 1930s for whom social origins took precedence over all else in life including ethnic origin.

As in the case of Clarice and Elisa Lispector, what is silenced by one member of the family is voiced by another, and in Aksyonov's *The Burn*, he fictionalizes Ginzburg's background, her relationship to her Jewish parents, and his own experience of living with her in Magadan and discovering his Jewish identity. Aksyonov wrote *The Burn* from

1969-1975, the book was rejected from publication in the Soviet Union, yet, the dates suggest that Aksyonov was affected by the loosening of the atmosphere during Khruschev's Thaw in the early 1960s, and the book is written in expectation of a more liberal atmosphere when writers will once again be able to speak truth to power.

Aksyonov introduces the fictional counterparts of his real grandparents. Given the lack of family history provided by Ginzburg, it is impossible to know how close Aksyonov's novel comes to describing reality. However, certain aspects of the narrative are clearly based on fact and demonstrate that Aksyonov was trying to recreate his family history. For example, Ginzburg's father (Solomon Ginzburg) was a pharmacist, and the same is true for the fictional Nathan von Steinbok, who opens his first and last pharmacy on the eve of the revolution and then becomes a pharmacist for a government-run establishment, and for Galaktion Gudiashvili, the fictional Georgian uncle from the Gradov family in *Generations of Winter* who also owns his own pharmacy in Tiflis, later nationalized. Other similarities to facts from Ginzburg's life related in *The Burn* from the point of view of Aksyonov's fictional double (Tolya von Steinbok) include descriptions of Ginzburg's living arrangements in Magadan where the 16-year-old Aksyonov came to live with his mother, of her husband Walter Luther fictionalized as Martin in the novel, and her traumatic second arrest and parting from her son which she tells about in detail in her own memoirs and which Aksyonov presents from Tolya von Steinbok's point of view in the novel.

Ginzburg was interrogated in the prison of Kazan, which she refers to as the feared "Black Lake" prison. Although she does not explain how her father died she does mention his death, as noted above. In *The Burn*, Nathan von Steinbok who is also interrogated in the "Black Lake" following his daughter's arrest dies of an acute case of tuberculosis which he catches in the prison's cells. Ginzburg's parents had two daughters

who reunited after Evgenia was allowed to return to the mainland; however, she found herself to have nothing in common with her sister intellectually. In *The Burn*, the von Steinboks also have two daughters.

After the October Revolution, *The Burn's* Nathan von Steinbok forces his daughter Tatiana (the fictional E. Ginzburg) to leave the familial home because she has joined the Komsomol. Ginzburg mentions in her memoir the "many years of alienation, mutual pain, misfortune, grievances" that followed her split from her father. Aksyonov even describes the fictional character's worries about his daughter that help shed light on the father/daughter recriminations that Ginzburg portrays in the memoir. At one point, speaking about his daughters' attitude towards their ethnic background, Nathan von Steinbok says, "Мои девочки уже совсем не чувствуют себя еврейками" /"My girls no longer feel that they are Jewish" (*Ozhog* 251).

A brief episode shows Nathan rejoicing that Kerensky will take over the government, "Подумать только Керенский! Прощай теперь черта оседлости!" because it signifies the end of the Pale of Settlement, that Jews will finally have a right to move around the country freely and live wherever they choose (193). Aksyonov also includes an episode where the fictional Nathan von Steinbok discusses the possibility of immigration to America with his brother Yasha. Yasha's two sons have joined the Red Army and Nathan tries to convince his brother that Jews will finally be accepted and made to belong in Russia. In fact, although this uniquely Jewish sub-plot of the novel is quite small, it is very important as Aksyonov consciously parses the intentions of Jews who had the opportunity to leave Russia and those who decided to stay, not knowing how possibly detrimental this decision would be for their children. Nathan says,

> -Послушай, Яша, наши дети больше не будут горбатыми! Европейский путь! Демократическая республика! Равенство наций! -Эх Натан, надо

> ехать! -Послушай, Яша, мои дочери и твои сыновья больше не будут жертвами этой дикой азиатской ксенофобии! [...]-Яша, я люблю эту страну! Нынешнея весна принесла мне русское сознание. Впервые я понял, что я не жид-пархатый, а гражданин Республики Россия. Гордость за свою страну переполняет меня! (250)
>
> --Listen Yasha, our children will no longer be hunchbacked! The European way! The Democratic Republic! Equality of the nations! ---Oh, Nathan, we need to leave! –Listen Yasha, my daughters and your sons will no longer be the victims of this wild, Asiatic xenophobia! [. . .]Yasha, I love this country. This spring brought me a Russian consciousness. For the first time I understood, that I'm not a flying kike, but a citizen of the Republic of Russia. Pride for this country overfills me. (250)

The dialogue shows a clear understanding of the situation of Jews prior to the Revolution of 1917. Nathan rejoices in the Revolution knowing that his children will no longer be handicapped (the word used here is "hunchbacked") because of their ethnicity. He believes that equality will finally be achieved and the old tsarist xenophobia done away with. Nathan feels that he is finally 'a citizen,' a term which carries great meaning. In Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir (*Hope Against Hope*) she says that her family's reason for not emigrating was one that went back to the Russian intellectuals' understanding of the Socratic meaning of citizenship: being a citizen of one's own country is one of the greatest statuses a human being can attain in life.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter provided a brief historical background of the Russian Jewish community in the Soviet Union from the Revolution of 1917 to the late 1970s, and to show how state propaganda at first allowed many Jews to feel that the Soviet regime would be positively disposed towards them-- leading many to renounce their ethnicity and instead embrace a created identity made up of Russian culture, education, and Marxist beliefs. The historical section of this chapter also showed how the government's prerogative of Russification and assimilation led many Russian Jews to

abandon their own culture, and how Jewish cultural figures along with Jewish literature were gradually eradicated. This left Jewish culture a barren field while any reference to Jewish subject matters became taboo. Finally, this chapter supplemented the self-suppressed biographical details of Ginzburg's life and Jewish identity with the fictionalized treatment of that life and identity as shown in Aksyonov's novel *The Burn*. The next chapter continues to argue for an inclusion of Ginzburg and Aksyonov in the Russian-Jewish cannon based on the treatment of Jewish subject matter in their respective works, *Into the Whirlwind* and *Generations of Winter*.

Chapter VII: Intertextuality and Collaboration in Familial Narratives

Ginzburg avoided her family as a subject in her work as starkly as Aksyonov attempted to recreate some version of the buried truth, but family was only one mirror onto Jewish identity for both writers. While the last chapter addressed Ginzburg's denial of her Jewish family background, and Aksyonov's soi-disant resurrection of that family in *The Burn*, this chapter will show the different ways in which both Ginzburg and Aksyonov dealt with Jewish identity outside the context of family. The chapter will also address the writers' treatment of religion, both Judaism and Catholicism, of Jewish physicality (she avoids descriptions of Jews, while Aksyonov stereotypes Jews), and of Jewish culture (she mostly leaves out ethnically Jewish characters, while he takes leading Jewish cultural figures and makes them fictional characters whose importance to the historical rendering of his family saga and Soviet cultural and political history cannot be undervalued.)

Vasilii Aksyonov, who began his literary journey with a number of ethnically neutral novels, became one of the first dissident authors to be exiled from the Soviet Union for his writing, writing that recovered some of the Jewish themes avoided by Ginzburg. His novel *Ожог* (*The Burn*, 1969-1975) established him at the vanguard of Soviet literature and at the same time led to his Soviet passport being rescinded while he was away from the country teaching. *The Burn* is an experimental novel, whose main protagonist or protagonists (all doubles of Aksyonov himself) are half Jewish and half Russian, and are reared in Magadan by their formerly imprisoned mother. The novel is dated in the late 1960s and 1970s during the fall of Khrushchev, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the fallout against Russian Jews precipitated by the Six Day War; the novel is set in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. I claim that the anti-Semitic and anti-

Zionist fervor of this period in the Soviet Union, combined with a repressive regime's influence on other nations such as Czechoslovakia, resulted in Aksyonov's interest in writing a subversive novel that treated a number of subjects which were previously under an ideological taboo, including the subject of Jewish ethnicity and anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Aksyonov writes,

> Когда я писал Ожог, я часто разговаривал со своей рукой [. . .]. Я говорил все время своей руке: 'Ты, рука, принадлежишь свободному человеку. Ты, рука, не должна останавливаться там, где тебе приказывают останавливаться советские табу. Ты рука должна доказать им [. . .]'
>
> "When I wrote The Burn, I often spoke with my hand… I said to my hand, you hand should not stop there where you are ordered to halt by Soviet taboos. You hand need to prove to them." ("Aksyonov o sebe" 126)

In this quote Aksyonov is not solely addressing the taboo of Jewish ethnicity which he treated in the novel, but all the negative consequences of life in the Soviet Union and under Stalin.

This chapter therefore examines Ginzburg's memoir in conjunction with Aksyonov's *The Burn* and *Generations of Winter*, and makes a case for reevaluating silences in Ginzburg's work based on the ethnic tropes that Aksyonov uses in his works, which begin to thematize Jewish matters. It will be shown that the anti-Zionist campaign in the Soviet Union which made Israel and subsequently Soviet Jews the targets of anti-Semitic attacks forced a number of Jews to reconsider their relationship to their own ethnicity. The effect of the anti-Zionist campaign on Aksyonov was to make him face his ethnic background and address it in *The Burn*. Finally, it will be shown that although Aksyonov did begin to briefly address Jewish issues in his subsequent novels, his portrayal of Jewish characters often remained skewed and caricatured. Because Soviet censorship banned Jewish issues from being treated in literary works, and banned Jewish works from libraries and bookstores, a whole generation of Jewish writers who grew up

after the Second World War, when such censorship was already firmly in place, had no positive Jewish literary models on which to base their attempts to recreate matters of identity in their works. Aksyonov, like many other Russian Jewish writers of his generation (those who were no longer idealizing the regime, who had lived through Khrushchev's renunciation of Stalin and were capable of writing works which commented on the darkest moments of Soviet history), was rediscovering what it meant to write ethnically affected characters in his works.

WRITING IDENTITY

Ginzburg seldom writes about other Jews, and if she mentions people of Jewish ethnicity who relate to her story, she never identifies them as Jewish unless their ethnicity is important to the telling of the story. She gives less weight to encounters with Jews than with people of many other nationalities. In fact, it must be specified that whereas more often than not she will mention the nationalities of other ethnics, and even find something to praise in them--for example she notes the accents and the vibrant looks of the many Georgian women she meets. Meanwhile, she more often than not skips accounts of meetings with other Jews and descriptions of them.

One of the initial chapters of the memoir relates the story of Professor Elvov, one of the first people in Ginzburg's circle to be arrested and in whose case Ginzburg herself was later implicated, tried, and sentenced to hard labor. Ginzburg delves into a long physical description of Elvov, yet does not identify him as a Jew,

> Это был человек, бросавшийся в глаза. Красно-рыжая курчавая шевелюра, очень крупная голова, посаженная прямо на плечи. Шеи у Николая Эльвова почти не было, и поэтому его высокая коренастая фигура производила одновременно впечатление и силы, и какой-то физической беспомощности. Где бы он ни появлялся, на него оглядывались. Не мог он остаться незамеченным и по своим душевным проявлениям. Его доклады, блестящие и иногда претенциозные, его выступления, безапелляционные и

> едкие, каскады эрудиции, которые он обрушивал на головы скромных казанских преподавателей, - все это делало его одиозной фигурой в городе. Было ему в 1935 году 33 года. (2007 Ginzburg 12)

There is no caricature of a typical Jew in Ginzburg's words. The reader can see that Ginzburg is attempting to draw a portrait of a man who does not necessarily belong to any one ethnic group. The fact that she does not delve into a description of ethnic traits underlines the taboos present in the Soviet society against words like 'Jew' and 'Jewish'. Ginzburg is not alone among Soviet Jewish writers of the 1960s in abstaining from an ethnic description. Vasily Grossman also attempts in his novels not to give too much weight to Jewish stereotypes, aware of the all-pervasive anti-Semitic fervor of the time. Genzeleva writes,

> […]позиция автора по отношению к еврейскому вопросу предельно осторожна: Гроссман ни на минуту не забывает о предвзятости массового читателя конца 40-х – середины 50-х годов к своим соплеменникам. Его еврейские персонажи нигде в Правом Деле прямо не названы евреями. Обеспечивая их еврейскую идентификацию, Гроссман отбирает только относительно нейтральные или приписываемые евреям 'позитивные признаки', входившие в распространенное представление о них.
>
> The position of the author in relationship to the Jewish question is pointedly cautious: not for a minute does Grossman forget the preconceptions of the mass reader, of the end of the 1940s and mid 1950s, towards his fellow countrymen. His Jewish personages in *For the Just Cause* are not identified as Jews. Providing their Jewish identification Grossman chooses only relatively neutral or 'positive traits' assigned to Jews and included in the widespread understanding of them. (66)

Further she writes that Grossman chose the characteristics for his characters "чтобы изначально не вызывать негативной реакции антиеврейски настроенных читателей"/ "[…]primarily not to call out a negative response from Anti-semitically-set readers" (Genzeleva 68). Like Grossman, Ginzburg must have been aware of the anti-Semitic fervor of the time and knew that it would be hard enough to publish a daring

treatment of the camps, but even harder if her work included any references to an ethnicity which had been out of favor for years.

There is only one episode that serves as an exception to this rule of non-referencing Jewish identity: Ginzburg writes about two friends she had made when she began to work in the children's camp in Magadan. They call themselves her relatives and have also been prisoners at one time. She also finds that after everything that they have shared together, as innocent prisoners, they can have what amounts to familial ties, this again points to Memmi's thesis on Jewish familial relationships. Both are doctors, and one of them is Jewish. This is the first time that her description of a Jew is warm, and almost sentimental,

> Старик Уманский, философ-созерцатель, знаток Священного писания, полиглот, пожиратель стихов, сформировался под влиянием противоречивых условий. Нищее детство в еврейско-украинском местечке, а потом долгая эмиграция и образование, полученное во Франции и в Швейцарии. Из чуть выпуклых голубых, совсем не выцветших глаз Уманского, из всех морщинок и бугорков стариковского лица так и струилась доброта. Речь его, битком набитая цитатами, была тем не менее ярко своеобразна, полна мягкого, слегка по-еврейски окрашенного юмора. (1990 Ginzburg 449)

For the first time in her narrative she focuses on the ethnicity of this surrogate relative Umanskii, whose 'Jewish' humor she seems to admire by granting it such positive characteristics as 'full of citations', 'vividly unique', and 'soft'.

Furthermore, there are several other characters in *Into the Whirlwind* whose names are clearly Jewish, for example, the interrogator Kogan and one of her fellow camp prisoners, Chava. Ginzburg does not analyze these encounters from an ethno-Jewish perspective. In one other episode, she speaks about the Jewish ethnicity of the daughter of her barrack mates who was shot by Germans, "Ларочку - полукровку, полуукраинку, полуеврейку расстреляли по доносу ее школьной подруги,

ревновавшей Лару к однокласснику" (1990 Ginzburg 294). Again as in most episodes Ginzburg mentions the ethnicity of a character only if it has to do with being singled out by the Nazis for extermination. However, she does not discuss the ethnicity of her barrack mate, and while the readers know that Lara was half-Jewish, but they know nothing about her mother.

There is no question that Ginzburg understood the extent of anti-Semitism in Russia and felt at times that she was a victim of it. During an episode in the memoir that takes place during the war, when the German women are put into special barracks with an especially harsh and monitored regime, Ginzburg was almost taken for a German because of her last name by the guards who supposedly could not tell the difference, she notes, "Первый раз в мировой истории оказалось выгодно быть еврейкой!"/ "For the first time in world history it was advantageous to be a Jewess" (1990 Ginzburg 291). This is the first time that Ginzburg mentions her own ethnicity in the memoir. The second is an episode relating an encounter with a dying German officer, whom she nurses back to health,

> Мы были наедине. Тут-то у меня и сорвались страшные слова, которых, наверно, не надо было говорить. - Я ангел? Что вы! Обыкновенный человек. И если бы вы меня встретили года три назад и в другой обстановке, вы бы сожгли меня живьем в газовой камере или удушили на виселице [. . .] - Я? Вас? - Его красивое лицо пошло багровыми пятнами. - Но почему? - Потому что я еврейка. А вы, кажется, фашистский офицер?
>
> We were alone. And these terrible words, which probably should have been left unsaid, were torn from me. 'I, an angel? No, I'm just an ordinary person. And if three years ago you had met me in a different setting you would have burned me alive in a gas chamber or hung me.' 'I, burn you? His handsome faces became dotted in red stains. But why?' 'Because, I'm a Jew. And you, I think are a fascist officer?' (1990 Ginzburg 384)

It is interesting that coming close to a fascist she feels the need to disclose her identity, whereas in all other, more ordinary settings she hides, or at least does not mention her origins. In negative situations such as this one she is not afraid to explore her Jewishness, but again she waits to be provoked. The situations where she exposes herself are those in which to admit that one is Jewish is a matter of pride, or where a lesson must be taught as in the episode with the Nazi, who is made aware that the woman who saved his life was also Jewish.

Later when the trial of the Jewish doctors is at its height on the mainland, Ginzburg notes that for the first time anti-Semitism became a significant issue in the camps. She includes an episode where heads of the Kolyma labor camp had to provide a detailed account of the Jewish ethnicity of their personnel,

> Мы просто и понятия не имели о том, как за время нашего загробного существования здорово окрепла там, на материке, дружба народов. Итак, в этом отношении Колыма позорно отставала. Только сейчас, в пятьдесят третьем, здесь спохватились и начали "регулировать национальный состав". Начальник сануправления Щербаков, - человек, безусловно, незлой и неглупый, - точно неожиданно сойдя с ума, метался по больничному двору, восклицая: "А Горин - не еврей? А Вальтер - не еврей? А кто здесь вообще евреи?"

> We simply had no idea how the friendship of nations had strengthened on the mainland during our GULAG afterlife. At least in this respect Kolima was shamefully lagging. Only now in 53, they caught up and began to 'regulate the staff nationality.' The overseer of the sanupravlenia Shcherbakov, a man, who was without question not evil and not stupid, as if suddenly having lost his mind, was running around the hospital yard screaming "Is Gorin not a Jew? Is Walter not a Jew? And who is a Jew here?" (1990 Ginzburg 535)

Yet Ginzburg does not provide any analysis of these events that would in any way show her sympathy for Jews. She does not condemn this development in negative terms because this blatant ethno-centrism has anything to do with Jews. Rather, she portrays it as a negative event only because communism, which was to have loved and embraced

people of all nations, does not stand for what it should have even on the mainland. She was aware of the blatant anti-Semitism in her country, yet she masked this knowledge in the narrative by saying that she had never known of the feelings of the populace towards different ethnicities "we simply had no idea how the friendship of nations had strengthened [. . .]" (1990 Ginzburg 535).

Furthermore, Ginzburg covertly mentions the anti-Semitic campaign that started in the late 1940s, but does so without ever pronouncing the words Jew, Jews, Jewish or anti-Semitism. She refers to a law instated in 1932 that required Soviet citizens to state their nationality in the "fifth paragraph" of their internal passports. As was shown in the history chapter when the anti-Semitic campaign began in the Soviet Union from 1948-1952, many Jews were relieved of their positions because of the fifth paragraph. One person who suffered from this was Colonel Tsirulnitskii, who took an interest in her and allowed her to stay in the same area where her husband was serving his sentence; the Colonel also filed papers on her behalf which allowed her to begin adopting her daughter Tonia. She conjectures that the Colonel's humanitarian interest in her arose from knowing he would soon be relieved of his job,

> Он был ошарашен этим, душевно метался, не находя объяснений чинимой над ним "несправедливости", и, может быть, впервые задумался о судьбах других людей. Я просто попалась ему под руку во время его великого смятения чувств. А то, что с ним случилось, было связано с другим землетрясением сорок девятого года, эпицентр которого находился на материке. До нас еще только начали доноситься слабые раскаты этого далекого грома. Дело в том, что у полковника, при всех его заслугах перед органами, был изъян в анкете. Изъян роковой и неустранимый. Он относился к пятому пункту анкеты - о национальной принадлежности.
>
> He was shocked by this, spiritually disturbed, he couldn't find an explanation for this 'injustice' brought upon him, and maybe for the first time he thought about the destinies of other people. I simply happened to be close during his great disturbance of feelings. But what happened to him, was tied to a different earthquake of 49, the epicenter of which was on the mainland. We were only

> hearing the weak rumble of this distant thunder. In fact, the colonel, with all his achievements in the organs, had a flaw in his resume. This flaw was both fatal and irrevocable; it belonged to the fifth point of the internal passport- on national identity. (2007 Ginzburg 707-08)

Ginzburg does not overtly mention the anti-Semitic campaign. Her references are covert, but no Russian-Jewish writer in the 1960s or before wrote about the campaign against the Cosmopolitans, the Doctors' Plot or the purging of the Jewish cultural elite, either. While Ginzburg chose to write very little about the "Jewish question" in her work, even her passing references spoke to some of the negative highlights of Soviet-Jewish history. When she mentions the fifth paragraph's role on the colonel's life the greater implication is that she is talking about the effects of the Cosmopolitan campaign on the Jewish population, she is bolder than most. Gilboa writes,

> …on the whole a conspiracy of silence prevailed in regard to what was happening to Jewish culture and its leaders….We shall merely point out that some Soviet writers, when asked about the mystery enshrouding Jewish culture in the Soviet Union, deliberately lied when they answered that they knew nothing untoward that had occurred, or assured their listeners that all was well. (206)

What must be read between the lines when looking at Ginzburg's passages about the effect of the Cosmopolitan campaign on Soviet Jewry is that she was writing in code about the relationships of Russian Jews and the effect that this anti-Semitic experience was having on Jews who previously had no interest in identifying with other Jews. In fact, the Colonel probably took an interest in her because of their shared ethnicity, as he was about to lose his job because the Soviet media, at the instigation of Stalin, began to speak about Jews as 'rootless cosmopolitans'. What he did for her arose out of a feeling for a shared national identity that became more acute when it was persecuted. Yet, unlike Tsirulnitskii whose predicament emphasized his relationship to his ethnicity, Ginzburg is not interested in speaking at length about the anti-Semitic campaign; she mentions it in passing and does not make obvious what it is she is referring to.

Ginzburg consciously creates a negative space in her work by mentioning the effects of the country-wide campaign to malign and smear Jews, yet never saying outright that this campaign arose from anti-Semitism, or a history of negative treatment of Jews in Russia. In this passage she designs a code language for things that relate to Jews; an earthquake becomes a symbol for the anti-Semitic campaign, the epicenter of the earthquake is a symbol for Moscow and Leningrad where the first ethnic arrests were carried out, and finally the 'weak rumblings' are the first signs that Jews were being let go from government positions, and 'distant thunder' again refers to the anti-Semitic campaign. Again, Ginzburg cannot even reference Jewish ethnicity without first designating a code that relates to natural phenomena.

Similarly, in Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoir *Hope Against Hope* about her husband Osip, she treats the subject of Jewish identity in exactly the same way as Ginzburg. In a chapter that discusses an acquaintance, 'D.', who could have been an informer (one of the prerogatives of Mandelstam's work is parsing which of their friends could have reported O. Mandelstam's poem against Stalin to the authorities) she writes "После войны до меня дошло, что Д. повесился. Это был испуг во время кампании против 'космополитов'. Храбростью Д. не отличался" (Mandelstam 108).

Again, similarly to the way that Ginzburg mentions the campaign against the "cosmopolitans," N. Mandelstam also carefully hints that D.'s suicide was a result of the new Soviet campaign against the Jewish intelligentsia. Neither before nor after, does she mention that D. was also Jewish, and it is only in reference to his fear of the campaign against the "cosmopolitans" that Mandelstam identities him as a Jew. Later in the memoir she writes about the effects of the Doctor's Plot on her own career. In 1953, she and a number of other Jews lost their jobs at the Ulyanov Pedagogic Institute, yet again she does not mention the Plot or delve into discussions of this period. It is only in a passing

reference that she identifies this purge of Jewish professors as a pogrom. Just like Ginzburg, Mandelstam does not feel it necessary to explain the campaign against the cosmopolitans or the Doctor's Plot or to speak about them at length; her audience, like Ginzburg's, are people of her circle, a significant portion of whom are Jews and who do not need this context explained to them. Yet, references to these events, given a lack of any accompanying explanation, show once again the troubled relationship to identity that both these prominent Russian-Jewish writers had.

In another instance in Mandelstam's memoirs she mentions Boris Pasternak's negative reaction to O. Mandelstam's fatal poem about Stalin,

> 'Как мог он написать эти стихи—ведь он еврей!' Этот ход мыслей и сейчас мне не понятен, а тогда я предложила Пастернаку еще раз прочесть стихотворение,чтобы он конкретно показал мне, что в них противопоказано еврею, но он с ужасом отказался.
>
> 'How could he have written these poems—he's a Jew!' This direction of thought is even now unclear to me, and I offered then that Pasternak should read the poem yet again, so that he would tell me concretely what in them is adverse to a Jew, but with horror he refused. (189)

The question of identity is so discomfiting for many Soviet-Jewish writers that their reaction is often quite obtuse on the surface. It seems obvious that Pasternak meant Mandelstam should not have composed the poem because, knowing Stalin's feelings towards Jews, others might bear responsibility for it simply by being of the same nationality as Mandelstam.

Later in Ginzburg's memoir she begins a chapter by mentioning the Doctors' Plot, but again only hints that it targeted Jews outright,

> А на другой день с утра, развернув газету, я увидела сообщение о деле врачей – убийц в белых халатах. То, что последовало за этим, было до сих пор неслыханно на Колыме. Впервые на нашу дальнюю планету проникла эта отрава. До тех пор мы были в глазах начальства единым массивом. Нас терзали на основе полного национального равенства, не выделяя из

> общей мученической среды, так сказать, ни эллина, ни иудея… Даже космополитская кампания сорок девятого года прошла как-то стороной от нас. А о нашем обществе заключенных и ссыльных в этом плане и говорить было нечего. Ведь среди нас преобладали комсомольцы двадцатых и тридцатых годов, надежно законсервированные в идеях и категориях своей юности. (2007 Ginzburg 745)

> And the next day, in the morning, opening the newspaper, I saw the report about the Doctor's Plot- the killers in white robes. What followed this was until then unheard of on Kolyma. For the first time this poison reached our distant planet. Until then we were one mass for our superiors. We were tortured on the basis of full national equality; neither Hellenes nor Hebrews were distinguished from the common suffering mass [. . .] Even the cosmopolitan campaign of 1949 passed us by the side. Not even to mention our community of prisoners and exiles, since among us the majority was members of the Comsomol of the 1920s and 1930s, safely preserved in the ideas and categories of their youth [. . .] (2007 Ginzburg 745)

In this illuminating passage Ginzburg gives the reason for her own reticence on the subject of ethnicity. She says that her friends, never mentioned ethnicity and were not anti-Semitic specifically because of their background in the Komsomol and the tenets of Lenin's international Communisim. Yet Pinkus writes that in fact there was quite a bit of anti-Semitism in the Komsomol and Communist Party members in the 1920s, "…as Kalinin noted in 1926, Communist Party and Komsomol members and the new social elite were more anti-Semitic than their predecessors under the tsars" (85). It is difficult to determine whether Ginzburg is idealizing the Komsomol membership of her youth as something other than what it was. Those ideals notably included a near-erasure of identity. The true Communist was not tied to petty bourgeois national interests; therefore, the Bolsheviks felt that "The only possible future for the Jews was assimilation, an approach strongly supported by the movement's active Jewish members" (Gur-Gurevitz 50). Other Communists in the 1920s and 1930s agreed with this agenda. What Ginzburg references here are the ideals of the early Communists who were raised on Lenin's speeches; among those speeches were those about the equality of nations but also those

speeches by Lenin where he reiterated Marx's point that the idea of Jews as a nationality was perpetuated by anti-Semites. To Ginzburg the senselessness of her fight against the Stalinist machine is mirrored in the subversion of old maxims, in the upending of old laws such as those that once regarded all ethnicities as equal to one another.

In another mention of Jewish themes, Ginzburg tells the story of visiting women in different barracks and seeing a women's chorus perform. She says that present was the elderly and almost bald Princess Yurusova, who said at seeing the performance, "When ancient Jews became Babylonian slaves, they were forced to play the harps. But they hung their harps and said 'We will work, but we will never play'" (1967 Ginzburg 418). It is interesting that Ginzburg never mentions what she herself thought of this episode. Many prisoners would be angry at those who had the cushy job of playing in the camp bands, yet instead of speaking out about this herself, Ginzburg gets someone to act out the thoughts for her. Also, one wonders if she feels that she can mention Jews and their history only when someone else bothers to mention them, as in the example of the Nazi, or in a distant Biblical context. In fact, this is similar to what Clarice does, who never speaks about Jews herself but allows other Jewish interlocutors to speak to their shared ethnicity. There is a timidity present in the work of both Ginzburg and Clarice, a fear of taking their mass reader too far along a route of ethnicity that they are ambivalent about and that they believe will distract their reader from their main point. Yet, the context and the implications of talking about Jewishness are very different for the two of them, Ginzburg might accurately fear not being published, Clarice is more aware that her *brasilidade*, her Brazilian identity might be upended by any ethnic addition.

TALMUDIC TIES TO INTERROGATION

Ginzburg introduces one of her first interrogators by retelling an anecdote, or rather, a detail she had first noted about the man. She had been vacationing with her husband at a resort for the members of the regional committee, when she noticed someone that she had not seen before,

> '-Это что еще за рыжий Мотеле?' - шепотом спросила я мужа. –' Не рыжий, а черный, и не Мотеле, а товарищ Бейлин, новый председатель партколлегии КПК.' Думала ли я тогда, что за внешним обликом добродушного местечкового портного скрывается мой первый инквизитор?
>
> 'Who is this red haired Motele?' I whispered to my husband. 'Not red but black, and not Motele, but comrade Beilin, the new chairman of the KPK.' Did I think then, that behind the exterior of the warmhearted backwater tailor hid my first inquisitior? (1967 Ginzburg 22)

This is the first time that she refers to anyone of the Jewish nationality with what is a stereotypical approach. Since this episode comes so early in the book it functions to show the reader that she is aware of the Jews around her, and that she finds some like Beilin ridiculous. In fact, in naming her inquisitor the 'redheaded Motele' Ginzburg refers to a fictional character from a children's verse novella by the Russian-Jewish writer, Joseph Utkin, called "Story of the Redheaded Motele" (*Повесть о рыжем Мотеле, господине инспекторе, раввине Исайе и Комиссаре Блох*, 1933). The work tells the story of a young boy, reared to be a tailor and orphaned in the Kishinev pogroms, he subsequently becomes a Soviet Commissar and chooses his motherland over America where other Jews are emigrating. It seems obvious that Ginzburg must have been aware of the works of Russian-Jewish literature, otherwise she would not have been able to make the connection between her interrogator and a fictional Jewish character. While she usually ties Jewishness to the petite bourgeoisie (as in the comment about her father's bourgeois background), here Ginzburg ties her cruel interrogator to Judaism. A few

paragraphs later she ascribes some stereotypically negative characteristics associated with Jews to her persecutor,

> Через несколько дней после этой первой встречи я уже сидела перед жгучими садистско-фанатическими очами товарища Бейлина в его кабинете, и он со всей талмудистской изощренностью уточнял и оттачивал формулировки в отношении моих "преступлений"”
>
> A few days after this first meeting I was already sitting in front of the burningly, sadistically fanatic eyes of Comrade Beilin in his cabinet, and with a Talmudic shrewdness sharpened the formulations in regard to my ‘crimes.’ (1967 Ginzburg 22)

Right after this episode, another interrogator begins the same process as Beilin. This one has a distinctly Russian last name, and Ginzburg changes her analysis of the interrogator’s “Talmudic shrewdness” to mention that he was Beilin’s opposite in his approach, but his double in “sadistic-shrewdness.” The reader has to ask what characteristics of a Talmudic scholar she is referring to here which can be compared to methods used in prison interrogations. Talmudists are known as highly learned analysts and critics who examine the Hebrew Bible for detailed interpretations of religious law. They are often regarded as the fathers of modern criticism in Western literature. Yet she is comparing the meticulous work of Talmudic scholars to the detailed interrogations of her torturer and condemning ultra-religiosity in both religion and the state.

For anyone who spent time in Soviet camps or prisons, hearing the curses and vile language being used on the prisoners, especially during interrogations, would have been the norm. Ginzburg only sometimes mentions the vile language to which she was exposed: “Правда, ругательства его были еще далеки от тех, которые мне довелось потом услышать в НКВД. Это были политические ругательства. Соглашатели! Праволевацкие уроды! Троцкистские выродки! Примиренцы задрипанные!” (1967 Ginzburg 24) At other times, she prefers to only hint at what was being said to her by the

interrogators (1967 Ginzburg 82). Yet, unlike other Jewish writers who were in the camps, Ginzburg does not spend any time describing the specifically racial epithets that were surely thrown at her because of her ethnicity and obviously Jewish last name. She recounts one incident when captain Vvevers interrogates her and throws a large marble paper weight at her, narrowly missing her head and making a hole in the wall, "What,' heated from cocaine and my persistence Vvevers finally becomes demonic. 'Opposition? You name this band of killers and spies the opposition. Oh you…'" (1967 Ginzburg 101). This is one example of a sentence in which she leaves out all the verbal and possibly racial abuse that could be just as insulting and hurtful as the paper weight that almost killed her. Her silences, however, turn into fictional material for Aksyonov, and in describing the interrogation of Nathan von Steinbok, the fictional stand-in for Ginzburg's father Solomon in *The Burn*, Aksyonov uses the anti-Semitic epithets which must have been thrown at Ginzburg herself but which she chooses not to repeat in her memoir. The interrogator who examines von Steinbok's case in the "Black Lake" prison screams "Жидюга старый, троцкистку воспитал!—орал на фармацевта следователь"/ "You old kike, you've raised a Trotskyite!-screamed the interrogator at the pharmacist" (194). There is the possibility that because she wants her narrative to be a universal once she cannot mention the racial epithets, which would immediately assign to her not the general Russian ethnicity, but a specific one that might alienate her readers. It is just as likely, though, that she was equally influenced by and invested in the Russian literary ideal, writing without the dirty details.

At the same time the fact that racial epithets were thrown at Russian Jews by prison authorities and other prisoners is undeniable. Mikhail Shulman in his memoir *Butyrskii Decameron* recounts many instances of such racial slurs. In one instance his brother Zinovii Shulman, a famous singer and cantor, was being recruited to spy on other

Jews in the synagogues and in the process told "Your audience received you very warmly. And although I don't know anything in 'Jewish' besides the word 'putz', I never-the-less understood that you are a good artist…So there putz, I would sincerely not want to arrest you, but I see that it will be inevitable" (305). Shulman also recounts how he and other Jews were accused of being lazy, this being a common stereotype of Jews. One of Shulman's wardens constantly referred to him as a kike and as he was interrogated right after his first arrest he was told "will you write you serpent, will you write, you damned Trotskyite, will you write you kike-face?" (Shulman 358). This was in the same year that Ginzburg was arrested, but whereas she mentions only the political insults, Shulman shows that even in 1937 the Russian police were just as capable of using racial slurs and mixing them with political ones as in the years after the Doctors' Plot.

THE GOOD AND BAD CHRISTIAN

When Ginzburg came out of the GULAGs she converted to Catholicism, a religion practiced by her second husband Walter Luther. There are a number of reasons for her conversion. The first is that many GULAG writers, Ginzburg among them, who wrote repeatedly that the only people who survived the camp experience and remained 'people' instead of turning into the animals that their captors had become, were all religious. The question remains why she did not turn to the religion that she was born into, Judaism. It is possible that Judaism was too far removed from her experience and that she chose what was close at hand. The unnamed editors of the first article of the first issue of Jewish Samizdat, called "Iton" Alef, "About Assimilation" explain that Jews who had almost no relationship with Jewish culture, history, or religion might turn to the only religion that is readily available to them:

> Неудивительно в этих обстоятельствах, что религиозно ищущий интеллигент еврейского происхождеия нередко обращается в православие , что, в конечном счете, означает еще один шаг к ассимиляции.
>
> It is not surprising in these circumstances, that an ethnically Jewish intellect searching for religion turns to Russian Orthodoxy, which in the final count means one more step towards assimilation. (1: 3)

It is important to examine the aspects of Christianity that Ginzburg was interested in, based on her memoir, to show why it was necessary for her to accept Christianity over Judaism. For Ginzburg, conversion to Catholicism is not so much focused on the physical characteristics of Christian tradition and faith, the observances and traditions of Christian holidays or confession. Rather, she was interested in the spiritual aspects of religion, a belief in a God that would provide an explanation for what had occurred.

In her memoir, she surprises and delights her fellow worker in the men's kitchen, the deaf German Helmut, when she gives some extra bread to her ex-interrogator Major Elshin, then dying in the men's camp. She forgives Elshin as well as many of the others who were responsible for sending people to the camps.

Most often in her narrative, Ginzburg uses Christian signs and imagery rather than any other ethnic, religious or folk symbolism to portray her experience in Russian prisons and camps. It is notable that for someone who converted to Catholicism, she often uses this Christian imagery to describe the negative aspects of her imprisonment. She uses images of the Inquisition for purposes of comparison to her own trial, such as the word auto da fe to refer to the liquidation of books at her own apartment in preparation for her arrest and for the possible search of materials in her house (1967 Ginzburg 53). She refers to Beilin as her first inquisitor (1967 Ginzburg 22) and then composes a song about the solitary cell that begins with the line 'everything is by the saintly inquisitorial laws' (1967 Ginzburg 279). She continues to refer to all her interrogators as inquisitors--Tsarevskii, Vvevers and Major Elshin. When she is brought to the Butyrka prison, the

women are divided and she is received by a woman with what she describes as the strict face of a nun (1967 Ginzburg 166). She describes her first prison as a monastery (1967 Ginzburg 68). Whether referring to Catholic monasteries and the Inquisition, or referencing Talmudic scholars, for Ginzburg organized religion often carries a negative connotation.

Later, Ginzburg uses positive Christian imagery, but this does not appear as often as the other instances. When the imprisoned women are dying of thirst on the train, they finally get enough water and showers at one of the stops, but are forced to take these showers naked, in front of their guards who are all men. Ginzburg describes their elder/prefect Fisa, stripped of her clothes, she stood covered by her red hair which streamed down to her knees, "She stood there with her basin in her hand and seemed at the same time the Ural Loreleyei and Saint Barbara, who through a miracle grew out long hair to cover her nakedness in front of the pagan-torturers" (1967 Ginzburg 361). Positive Christian imagery comes out only in describing individual acts of people, never something that has a mass organizational structure which Ginzburg automatically uses as a comparison to the Soviet torture machine.

She also recounts that some of the most impressive people in the camps were the religious, who with their faith were able to withstand almost any punishment. One specific story that she tells is about the religious peasants from Voronezh who would constantly over-fulfill the plan of cutting trees. Yet when Easter came they would not work, because it was a sin, and despite being forced to stand barefooted in freezing water, they withstood their punishment and the next day again over-fulfilled the plan and never complained. Ginzburg writes that many of her fellow prisoners did not understand how to look at these peasants, yet it seems that she found theirs to be an amazing show of faith

that impressed her tremendously and later maybe even led to her conversion to Catholicism.

It also seems that Ginzburg's affection for the spirituality of Catholicism and Christianity was so strong that she would project her own converted identity to other Jews around her as if it were only natural. Kopelev tells a story about having a friend ask him why he had not heard from Kopelev himself that he had converted. As it turned out, Ginzburg had been telling people that Kopelev was a Christian. He confronted her and she responded that she had seen a cross above his bed, and that she remembered from his memoirs that he was very open to Russian orthodoxy. He finally convinces her that he is an agnostic, and remarks that when they would get on the subject of religion, "she would note with an ironic intonation: 'Yes yes, you are an agnostic. But of course, this you, like an agnostic, cannot acknowledge'" (Kopelev and Orlova 862). In conclusion, for Ginzburg organized religion such as the Catholic Church never appealed to Ginzburg, while she had converted to Christianity it was the spirituality of the true believers that appealed to her throughout her stay in the camps.

INTERTEXTUALITY IN AKSYONOV

In Ginzburg and Aksyonov's case the idea of intertextuality, the dialogue between their two texts is the most evident. Each appears as a character in the others' works: Ginzburg talks about reuniting with Aksyonov in Magadan after her GULAG sentence is over, she recounts how she shared the first draft of *Into the Whirlwind* with him

> Именно на переломе от девятого к десятому октября 1948 года, уже ближе к рассвету, я рассказала ему устно задуманные главы *Крутого Маршрута*. Он был первым слушателем…/ At the break of day, closer to sunrise, I told him orally the planned chapters of *Into the Whirlwind*. He was my first audience" (2007 Ginzburg 661).

Similarly, Ginzburg becomes a character in *The Burn* and is briefly mentioned in *Generations of Winter* when a character warns that those who have already served their sentence are being arrested again in alphabetical order "Вчера взяли Женю Гинзбург"/ "Yesterday they took Zhenya Ginzburg" (3: 238), in fact, Ginzburg was arrested a second time and people whose last names came after hers in alphabetical order knew to prepare for an imminent arrest.

In an article about Aksyonov and his book *The New Sweet Style*, in *Harper's Magazine*, Jonathan Dee writes that Aksyonov's parents hid his nationality from him until he was fourteen. While the fifth paragraph always reflected the mother's nationality, it only became law in 1932 the same year that Aksyonov was born. The law forced all people over sixteen to resubmit their paperwork; possibly his passport escaped the incriminating nationality by virtue of being born too early for the law to apply to him. Mordecai Altshuler in his work on Soviet Jews writes,

> There is reason to assume that minors, even those born to Jewish mothers, were registered in a considerable proportion of the mixed families according to the nationality of the non-Jewish parent at census time… However, most offspring of mixed marriages declare themselves non-Jewish nationals in any case upon receiving their first passports. (24)

Aksyonov's parents would have registered him as a Russian. Until the age of sixteen he resided with his father's relatives, and it is probable that they would have judged it detrimental to the boy's future to tell him of his Jewish heritage. In *The Burn*, Aksyonov includes an episode when his fictional stand-in Tolya von Steinbok who has been using another last name is identified by his real last name in school and exposed as a Jew and the son of an enemy of the people. The episode explains the change of the last name to cover an identity that could have only hurt his chances in society;

> Фамилия эта, дворянско-жидовская, столь неудобная в царстве победившего пролетариата, в далекие времена была надежно прикрыта Толиным

> папашей, путиловским питерским активистом Боковым. Вот получилось дивное созвучие Фон-Штейн-Боков!-ехидничал дедушка, [. . .] но потом решил , что, ах, внукам все ж таки будет значительно удобнЕе! (Ozhog 239)
>
> This aristocratically-kike sounding last name, was so uncomfortable in the kingdom of the victorious proletariat, was in olden times covered by Tolya's father, the Putilov Petersburgian activist Bokov. This is how the wondrous Von-Shtein-Bokov was created! Joked the grandfather…who later decided that for the grandchildren it would be decidedly more *comfortable*. (Ozhog 239)

So the fictional character's too Jewish-sounding last name was changed. The surname that Aksyonov creates for his character is reminiscent of his two own last names: Burg (of Ginzburg) and Stein are equally Jewish-sounding, and Aksyonov and Bokov end in the same two letters. Like countless cultural and political figures whose hidden Jewish last names were exposed in the Soviet press, Aksyonov exposes the fictional character Tolya von Steinbok and guides the reader through the agonizing panoply of feelings that arise when he is identified as an outsider by society.

The explanation that Dee provides for why the family hid Aksyonov's mother's nationality from him is that it was to protect Aksyonov from the possible negative consequences of letting people know he was only half-Russian, the other half being Jewish. On the subject of intermarriage, Altschuler notes "In the Soviet Union, the Jewish spouse in such a marriage commonly distances himself or herself from the Jewish community in favor of greater identification with the non-Jewish spouse's group, a process pursued by the offspring" (25). It is possible that Ginzburg did not want her son to consider himself Jewish not because it would be detrimental to him but because she identified more with Russian culture. Gur-Gurevitz writes,

> The registration of nationality as Jewish in one's passport was disturbing to the individual, and the tendency was to try to be rid of it. In mixed marriages, the children were usually registered according to the nationality of the non-Jewish spouse. Since most Jews encountered anti-Semitic incidents, they could explain any lack of success or personal or professional failure on their registration as Jewish, a matter clearly beyond their control. They felt themselves rejected and

> spurned because of their being Jewish and, moreover, because of a Judaism that they neither knew about nor comprehended. (214)

Larisa Bogoraz (wife of Yuli Daniel, another famous Russian Jewish writer and dissident) writing in *Jewish Samizdat* explains that it was the national mood in the 1950s, when Jews had trouble finding employment, and the relationship of the authorities to the Jews began to change, which led people to either wholly reject their Jewish ethnicity or embrace it out of solidarity,

> Вот тогда началось активное самоопределение евреев – во всяком случае, моего поколения. Некоторые старались найти формальные основания считаться русскими или хотя бы детям записать русскую национальность. Другие – я знаю несколько таких случаев, - наоборот, записывались евреями из чувства протеста.
>
> Then began the active self-definition of Jews—at least of my generation. Some tried to find formal ways of being listed as Jews and finding ways to list their children under the Jewish nationality. Others—and I know a few examples—inversely listed themselves as Jews out of a sense of protest. (4: 41)

Yet, in Ginzburg's family Aksyonov's identity had been hidden from him much earlier than the 1950s. Also, they were not the only family in which the children did not know that they were Jewish; this was in fact a common phenomenon. In another article in Jewish Samizadat entitled 'I am a Jew, What Does This Mean' ('Я еврей что это такое') Matlin notes,

> И, с другой стороны, откуда у меня , десятилетнего мальчика, который до той поры ничего не знал о своей национальной принадлежности, родители избегали вопросов на эту тему, как неинтеллигентных, даже неприличных[. . .]
>
> And on the other hand, I was a ten year old boy who previously knew nothing about his nationality, my parents avoided all questions on this topic, as unintelligent, even improper [. . .] (6: 77)

For Matlin's family, not speaking about one's Jewishness was a sign of good breeding as only anti-Semites brought up the subject of ethnicity, but also probably

because it made them uncomfortable. For many Russian Jews being Jewish was something to be ashamed of, something that needed to remain hidden lest it cause an anti-Semitic attack, lest it provoke the 'usual response'.

AKSYONOV'S CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH SELVES IN FLUX

While Ginzburg underwent spiritual and physical assimilation, conversion from Judaism to Catholicism and identification with Russianness over Jewishness, her son Aksyonov, who for many years considered himself to be Christian, underwent a transition late in life that reunited him with his Jewish roots. In *The Burn*, Aksyonov's fictionalized self Tolya von Steinbok discusses Christianity with his stepfather Martin who is Catholic (the fictionalized Walter Luther, Ginzburg's third husband). Tolya, who is a Komsomol youth member, muses about his own identity and about the identity of Christ,

> […]Кто его распял!? Почему он Сын Божий? Как он воскрес? Почему к нему обращаются униженные люди? Кто я и к кому мне обращаться? Откуда я пришел в этот мир и куда я уйду
>
> […]Who crucified him!? Why is he God's Son? How was he resurrected? Why do the humiliated turn to him? Who am I and whom shall I turn to? Where did I come from and where will I go? (Ozhog 208)

In the context of this novel, *The Burn*, just like in Ginzburg's *Into the Whirlwind*, Christianity becomes a positive faith because it heals the injured and the debased, and because Tolya is having these religious misgivings almost at the same time when he realizes his ethnic identity, and how he might suffer from it. In a strange twist both GULAG survivors and Jews find salvation in the all-forgiving figure of Christ. In a similar list of questions that Clarice Lispector poses in a poem presented in the Brazilian chapter, there remains the juxtaposition that a Jew is asking these questions and reminding the reader that Christ was also a Jew. Aksyonov and Lispector address the question of who Christ was and why he died in a similar way; they relate the humiliated

GULAG survivors in the former and Afro-Brazilians in the latter to the Christ figure, and somewhere within that equation is a suggestion for the humiliated figure of the Jew.

Aksyonov favored a Christian perspective in many of his novels. However, in the last two decades of life in the United States, working at American universities, he stopped favoring assimilation for Jews. The critic Konstantin V. Kustanovich, of Vanderbilt University, writes,

> In the 1990s, Aksyonov's works also reflect changes in his ongoing spiritual search. Christianity, which appears as the only path to salvation in *Ozhog*, *Bumazhnyi peizazh*, and *Skazhi izium*, gives way, in the digressions of *Moskovskaia saga*, to eclectic mysticism based on oriental spiritual thought. At the end of *Novyi sladostnyi stil'* Korbakh discovers that he is a reincarnation of his Jewish ancestor who lived in the territory of Israel many centuries ago. The questions of Jewishness and assimilation bother Korbakh, who experiences an identity crisis both in Russia and in the United States. This time the protagonist finds his ultimate salvation and reunites with his love and son in the land of Israel, where he always "feels some kind of rise of spirit, solemn and at the same time softly pacifying." Aksyonov seems to disagree with Pasternak, who in *Doctor Zhivago* calls for assimilation and denounces Judaism in favor of Christianity. (“Evgenia Ginzburg”)

The Burn is not Aksyonov's only novel with an autobiographical, half-Jewish protagonist: in one of his last books, *The New Sweet Style*, the author is again writing about a half-Jew. Yet, as a writer and person he underwent a personal change towards his own Jewishness and Judaism while already living in the US were choosing a Jewish identity over ones sole Russian identity was no longer taboo.

In an article written by Aksyonov for *The New Republic* about going back to Russia during the perestroika, it seems that on this trip he was most affected by the level of anti-Semitism still present in Russian culture. Memmi’s thesis, that a Jew always experiences a moment when the majoritarian masses identify him as somehow different from them, is repeated in Aksyonov’s history. Like many others Soviet citizens who began to consider their ethnic identity only when they were identified as the “other”

Aksyonov also experiences such moments. On the subject of a meeting of writers of the 'village prose school' he writes that,

> At this meeting, speakers call for the expulsion of Jews from Russian culture, and identify the half-Jews among us. They go further: Who has wives, they ask, that are Jewish or half-Jewish? Those, it appears, are the most dangerous. Even a Moscow accustomed to anti-Semitic statements is taken aback by this particular gathering. Is this what our Russian writers are like? If I were asked what I consider the most loathsome aspect of contemporary Soviet life, I'd reply without hesitation: the Nazism and the anti-Semitism of these writers… Now it's the word 'Jew' that is becoming a euphemism, denoting everyone they hate: liberals, Westernizers, modernists. ("Not Quite a Sentimental Journey")

Aksyonov's preoccupation with anti-Semitism certainly is reflected in his novel *Generations of Winter*, where he describes and expostulates on anti-Semitic attacks and incidents his characters are involved in.

AKSYONOV'S HISTORICAL LANDSCAPING

In *Generations of Winter*, Aksyonov uses Ginzburg's experiences in the GULAGs and her memoir as foundations for his own plot devices. The novel, which fictionalizes the GULAG experiences of both Ginzburg and Aksyonov's father, as well as Aksyonov's own experiences in Magadan where he went to live with his mother when she was exiled to the area, employs a variety of secondary Jewish characters. In fact, while Aksyonov has also never been called a Jewish writer, *Generations of Winter* (*Moscow Saga* in Russian) can arguably be seen as a roadmap to the history of Soviet Jewish culture.

In this novel, Aksyonov presents the fictional Gradov family. The Gradovs are a Russian-Georgian clan from Moscow. The father, Boris Gradov is an academic and a medical doctor, his son Nikita Gradov is a military commander and later a Marshal in the Soviet army, his second son Kirill is a member of the Communist Party, and their sister Nina is a poetess and member of oppositional factions in the 1920s. While none of the

major protagonists are Jewish, two of their spouses are: Sandro Pevzner, Nina Gradov's last husband, and Cecilia Rosenblum, Kirill Gradov's wife). Outside of these protagonists the novel also fictionalizes the most important Jewish cultural figures of the day and employs them sparingly throughout the work. The historical landscape of the novel is constructed almost wholly from the fictionalized lives of the Soviet Jewish elite. No major cultural or political Jewish figure is left out. Mandelstam, Trotsky, Ehrenburg and Meyerhold make cameo appearances. In addition, throughout the work Aksyonov provides a running commentary on the ethnicity of his Jewish characters and on the anti-Semitism which pervaded the minds of even the most devout Communists.

In Aksyonov's novels, descriptions of the ethnicity of his protagonists create an indelible palate of characteristics, features, and traits: this technique contributes a rich panoply of distinctive characters to his fiction. In *Generations of Winter*, Aksyonov begins his introduction to one of the protagonists, Nikita Gradov, by describing his physical features—his nose and reddish hair—in order to underscore that instead of creating a fully Russian protagonist he has chosen one who is half Georgian (1: 14-15). This is similar to what Kaufman and Hart do in their plays (as show in the first two chapters) when they choose to portray ethnic characters like the German family in *The American Way*, or the Irish character in *Merrily We Roll Along*, or the African-American characters in *You Can't Take It with You*, while evading portrayals of Jewish ethnics.

The characterization above is important for a number of reasons, the first being that it shows that Aksyonov was interested in discussing the ethnicity of his characters. His lack of Jewish protagonists was therefore not because he uniformly abstained from drawing ethnic groups, but rather a conscious choice. Furthermore, the quote is important because it provides a counterweight to the somewhat caricatured descriptions of Jews that pepper the work while providing the historical polical and cultural background to the

1920s and 1930s. Similarly, when Kaufman and Hart employ Jewish personages in their play *Once in a Lifetime* , the overall effect is also a caricature that nevertheless leads to a historical portrait of Jewish presence in the movie industry.

One instance of this trend is the portrayal of the Polish Jewish revolutionary, Karl Radek, whom Aksyonov thrusts into the narrative as a relevant historical figure because he, like Trotsky, joined the opposition to Stalin's regime in the 1920s:

> Радек говорил по-русски грамматически правильно, но с очень сильным акцентом, а главное с какой-то сбивающей с толку интонацией.
>
> От одного только слова 'товаистчи' рабочие службы тяги начинали с ухмылкой переглядываться. Конечно, как сознательные члены партии, интернационалисты, они о национальности оратора не высказывались, но уж можно поручиться, что каждому пришло в голову что-то вроде: 'слишком жидовствующего жида прислали', или 'что-то очень уж евреистый этот еврей', или уж в крайнем случае 'какой-то не наш этот товарищ еврей'.
>
> Radek spoke Russian in a grammatically correct way, but with a very strong accent, and most importantly with an intonation that was confusing. From the word 'com'ades' on the workers began to exchange grins. Of course, as conscious members of the party, as 'internationalists' they did not comment on the nationality of the speaker: but it's clear that everyone thought of something like: "this kike is kikier than most" or "this Jew is more Jewish than most', or at the very least 'this comrade Jew isn't one of our own.' (1: 105-106)

Aksyonov shows us Radek not only to create a feeling for the political atmosphere of the 1920s or to get a sense of the opposition to Stalin at the time, but also to enter the minds of a number of long-time Communists. Aksyonov puts a pause in his description of the political atmosphere, pointing out that Radek's speech sounded foreign and 'too Jewish' to members of the audience. Paradoxically, while making a pointed attack on anti-Semites he nevertheless caricatures Radek. In Aksyonov's presentation, he is foreign to the majority of the listeners and speaks with an overly ethnic manner that allows his contemporaries to identify him as a Jew who does not come from the capital city but from

the provinces. Significantly, Radek cannot pronounce his 'r's' a typical stereotype of less urbane Jews in Russian literature (the concept of the verb 'kartavit' is discussed in the Brazilian chapter in reference to Clarice Lispector). Similarly, Kaufman and Hart in *Once in a Lifetime* use a very similar description for Herman Glogauer, the fictional stand-in for movie producer Irving Thalberg. Glogauer, rounds out his sentences with Yiddish-sounding phrases. At first glance it might seem that all that Aksyonov is doing is identifying the anti-Semitism present in even the most earnest of old-time Communists, but even if that were the case, he would not need to make this historical figure so easily identifiable as an anti-Semitic caricature. In the Western world where Jewish writers have written and published novels on Jewish themes continuously for the last hundred years and more such a portrait comes off as a blatant caricature. Kaufman and Hart's portrait of Glogauer is such a caricature; executed at a time when taboos on Jewish subjects as a result of the rise of Nazism had not yet been imposed in the US. Yet, as the section on censorship in the Soviet Union shows, the Russian public and Russian-Jewish writers had no models on which to base their descriptions of Jewish characters. In fact, Aksyonov in this novel is rediscovering what it means for a Russian Jewish author to write about Jews. Writing ethnically Jewish characters does not come naturally to him, his style, when it comes to these descriptions is awkward and ungainly, yet nevertheless he does it and through him the Russian novel is enriched by the appearance of more Jewish characters.

Jack Miller writes in his work Jews in Soviet Culture that the descriptions of Jews in Russian literature of the nineteenth century were often negative and centered on their supposed inability to speak Russian properly, among other delinquencies: "[. . .] the image of the Jews was the stereotype of the ludicrous stranger who is not sufficiently conversant with the Russian language, whose accent is odd and whose appearance is showy and vulgar" (4). Aksyonov appears to still subscribe to this stereotype or at least to

allow his characters, the proletarian masses, to subscribe to it. Towards the end of his speech, Radek says “Ей-ей, товаисчи ("ей-ей" в его устах прозвучало не в смысле "ей-ей", а в смысле "ой-ой")”/“’Ei, ei com’ades’ did not sound in his mouth with the significance of ‘ei, ei’ but with the sense of ‘oi, oi’” (1: 105-106). Here, Radek swallows the ‘r’ while addressing the comrades, and instead of saying ‘hey, hey” says ‘oi, oi’ a phrase that is widely known to be repeated by Yiddish speakers

One of the most famous poets of the period, Osip Mandelstam, also appears a number of times in the narrative. In Aksyonov’s description of him this is a slight man, reminiscent of a small bird. Mandelstam is presenting standing side by side with Nina Gradov; she is the “youthful beauty” and he the “pitiful, aging sparrow”. In fact, Nadezhda Mandelstam writes that Ehrenburg was the first to describe Mandelstam as a small man in his memoirs, because this fit better with his idea of the poet-intellectual as a weak victim, whereas in fact Mandelstam was actually quite tall, with broad shoulders,

> Эренбург, кстати выдумал, что О.М. был маленького роста. Я ходила на каблуках и едва достигала ему до уха, а я нормального среднего роста [. . .]. И щуплым О.М. не был-плечи у него были широкие. Вероятно, И.Г. запомнил крымского О.М., истощенного тяжким голодом, а для концепции с журналистским противопоставлением—такой слабый и безвредный, а что с ним сделали!-понадобился облик тщедушного человека, утонченно еврейского типа, вроде пианиста Ашкенази. Но О.М. совсем не Ашкенази-он гораздо грубее.
>
> In fact, Ehrenburg made up that O.M. was of a small height. I wore high heels and barely reached his ear, and I am of a normal medium height…And O.M. was never slight he had broad shoulders. It’s possible that, I.G. remembered the O.M. from the Crimea, famished from a heavy hunger, and for his conception of a journalistic comparison—weak and harmless, but what was done to him!-he needed a feeble person, of a refined Jewish type, like the pianist Ashkenazi. But O.M. wasn’t at all like Ashkenazi he was much rougher. (Mandelstam 365)

So it seems that Aksyonov is merely perpetuating a stereotype of Mandelstam, a vision of the Jewish intellectual as written by another Jewish intellectual. Other aspects of

Mandelstam's description are also apparently fictionalized. He is presented as a womanizer, flirting with Nina, and inviting her to have an affair with him, whereas in life his trip to Georgia took place with his wife Nadezhda. Aksyonov's physical descriptions of his Jewish characters are thus never complimentary and in fact often subscribe to the same anti-Semitism that he accuses the masses of harboring. He takes the somewhat typical approach of the majoritarian community who in labeling Jews as "the other" praised the most brilliant Jewish minds while lightly deriding their appearance.

Aksyonov's Meyerhold appears to be an arrogant, well-dressed dandy, wearing a suit that he just brought from Europe. His mannerisms and thoughts on the time are haughty and superior, yet as soon as he recites his silly epigram review of the staging of his *Inspector General*, his entire appearance transforms and he becomes the artistic director beloved by the public. Similar descriptions abound in the novel. Jewish cultural figures are portrayed as brilliant and admired for their intellect and wit; in fact, this is also the way the minor Jewish characters are portrayed. Cecilia Rosenblum and Sandro Pevzner, the spouses of two of the protagonists, are also incredibly erudite, honest, and maybe somewhat naïve. But the physical descriptions that Aksyonov provides of them are often less than flattering. As will be shown below both Cecilia and Sandro are physically lacking; she loses her sexual appeal after her husband is arrested, and Sandro is emasculated towards the end of the novel when he is blinded by the KGB. It seems as if for the author, Jews can only be admired for their minds, while their physicality is presented as unappealing. Yet even though Aksyonov uses an old anti-Semitic topos to present Jews, he is still dealing with the physicality of Jews, while in Ginzburg's work she completely stays away from the latter and notes that personally she could not be attracted to Jews. In effect, Aksyonov is grappling with a history that left Russian literature bereft of Jewish characters.

The descriptions of Cecilia Rosenblum, Kirill Gradov's wife, also starkly present a contrast between Jewish intellect and physicality . While at the beginning of the novel Cecilia, the brilliant interpreter of Marxist theory, is a buxom young girl, her husband's arrest transforms her into an old woman overnight:

> После ареста Кирилла Цецилия как-то стремительно опустилась, перестала даже причесываться, стирать рубашки, частенько от нее как-то резко и отталкивающе попахивало, и это был запах беды, неизбывного горя и распада.
>
> After the arrest of Kirill, Cecilia noticeably fell apart, she stopped brushing her hair, stopped washing her shirts, and often a sharp and repellent smell came off of her, it was a smell of troubles, of unremitting woe and decay. (2: 13-14)

While Cecilia's mind continues to stay sharp--she reads, keeps her job as a Marxist lecturer, and has no trouble interpreting the excesses of the Communist regime in a positive light--physically, she loses all of her womanhood. Her adopted son Mitya cannot even see her as a woman:

> Трудно себе представить, что та рыжая деваха с очень белым, веснушчатым телом и эта пожилая еврейка -- одно лицо. Ну, как это можно быть такой ужасной еврейкой, такой, можно сказать, просто вопиющей старой еврейкой, подумалось Мите, и он содрогнулся от отвращения. От отвращения не к "тете Циле", а к самому себе…
>
> It's hard to believe, that that red-headed girl with the really white, freckled body and this elderly Jewess are one and the same. But how is it possible to be such a horrifying Jewess, such a screaming elderly Jewess: thought Mitya to himself, and trembled from repulsion. Not from a repulsion towards 'aunt Tsilya' but from a repulsion towards himself. (2: 13-14)

Even though Mitya's description of Cecilia is filled with repugnance and subscribes to all the ancient stereotypes about Jews, the narrator seeks out the best in Mitya. Instead of stating that Mitya is repulsed by Cecilia, the narrator allows Mitya to think that he is disgusted by his own distaste for her. It is a fine line in the text, though, to be sure, his

aversion to his adopted mother appears all too real and visceral. Aksyonov's ethnic stereotyping subscribes to the negative views of the Jewish body perpetuated by centuries of European prejudice.

In fact, the description of Cecilia is associated in Mitya's mind with the smell of fish oil which she has brought him; the fish oil has spilled out of its bottle and stained her bag, "Боялся, конечно, не запаха, а причастности к еврейке, которая еще и вонючий узелок сует, как будто нарочно, как будто для пущего анекдота."/ "He was afraid of course, not of the smell, but of the association with a Jewish woman, who was shoving a stinking bag at him, as if on purpose, as if to amplify the anecdote" (2:12). So not only is Cecilia repulsive because she has become this 'ugly', 'elderly Jewess' but she also constantly forces him to stand out from the crowd, in this instance by handing him a bag leaking of fish oil. Cecilia is not womanly, attractive or beautiful (especially in comparison to the two Russian Gradov women Nina and Veronika, who are the epitomes of sexuality and beauty); and those are not her only defects as Aksyonov also endows her with an enormous birthmark under her nose, "[. . .] верхняя губа с большой родинкой под левым крылом носа сильно вытягивалась, кажется, хотела поцеловать"/ "[…] the upper lip with the large birthmark under the left wing of the nose extended itself as it wanted to kiss him" (2: 13-14).

Sandro Pevzner, Nina Gradova's last husband, is identified at first as a Georgian artist, but after letting the reader mistakenly believe that he is Georgian, the narrator dissuades the reader from that notion,

> Он был очень типичным грузином, этот Певзнер, он и выглядел как грузин, со своими усиками, в большой кепке и демисезонном реглане с поясом. Удивительна способность евреев приобретать черты народов, среди которых им довелось жить. Русского Певзнера вы сразу отличите от польского, а уж между грузинским и турецким Певзнерами совсем нет ничего общего.

> He was a typical Georgian, this Pevzner; he looked like a Georgian, with his moustache, his large cap and his all-season belted coat. It is the surprising ability of Jews to acquire the features of the people among whom they are living. You will easily distinguish a Russian Pevzner from a Polish Pevzner, and between a Georgian and a Turkish Pevzner there is absolutely nothing in common. (1: 414-415)

It should be pointed out that this type of description which speaks about Jewish ethnicity, identity and physicality shows that Aksyonov is interested in writing about Jews, but almost as a non-Jew would, differentiating between 'them' and 'us'. Later in the novel, Pevzner's wife Nina is arrested and he sits in front of the canvas impatient to paint but feeling that he would betray her if he allows himself something so pleasurable while she is possibly being tortured. Once again the Jewish male is presented as an effeminate man, who cannot defend his wife; it is the life of the mind that preoccupies him more. Over an over again the tropes of the weak, impotent Jewish body pervade Aksyonov's work. It is at this moment that three KGB officers walk into his studio: they blind him and then beat him senseless, using anti-Semitic slurs to punctuate their violence. Russians and Georgians definitely come off as the more masculine figures in this novel, but it is only brutality and violence that makes them so. While these descriptions of Jews seem never to stray from the stereotype and do not create empowered ethnically Jewish personages with agency, nevertheless they re-inject Jewish fictional figures into Russian literature.

SECONDARY PLOT

In *Generations of Winter*, Aksyonov builds his fictional plot on the historical timeline of major milestones for Soviet Jewry (yet, it is not a novel about Soviet Jewry). He does this by punctuating the time elapsed, and situating the fictional premise of the novel in the concrete events that affected both the Jewish and non-Jewish populations of Russia. To mark these events he almost exclusively uses major Jewish historical/cultural figures that played important roles in the given historical period.

It is my contention that Aksyonov wanted to fill a gap in Russian literature while writing this novel. Aksyonov's book was not meant to be a novel about the Jewish experience during the worst of the Stalin years but to fill the lacunae about the impact of great Jewish minds on the Soviet culture of those years. Aksyonov therefore, combined the two ingredients which he sought in making this novel, he uses an ethnic family who is not Jewish as a stand-in for a large Jewish family saga (already executed by Vasily Grossman in *Life and Fate*) but the historical background of the novel is not punctuated with the achievements of Georgians in Russia, but with the presence of the Soviet-Jewish cultural elite. While no one would call this a Jewish novel as the main characters are a Russian-Georgian family, it at the same time presents a unique experience of Russian culture through Jewish achievements.

The first time Osip Mandelstam is presented in the novel is in the thoughts of the spy and NKVD member Stroilo, who unwillingly and at first unconsciously recites the words of a Mandelstam poem. "То кочки, то лужи какие-то под ногами -- чего поперлись на реку, корни какие-то, стихи этого Мандельштама, бзики профессорских детишек [. . .]" (1: 64). Aksyonov puts Mandelstam's verse into the mind of this character to show how ubiquitous and utterly pervasive his work was to the generation of Soviets raised in the 1920s and 1930s.

A little later in the novel Mandelstam appears again, this time in Georgia. Nina runs into him while she is hiding in the republic after her involvement with the Trotskyite opposition group whose members are all subsequently arrested. Aksyonov again uses Mandelstam in order to give more weight to his descriptions of the epoch; the reader learns that everyone in Tiflis's literary circles knows that the poet has been traveling in Georgia. He is seen as a kind of poetic deity whose works everyone knows by heart; Nina recites his own verses back to him (1: 208-213).

Aksyonov attempts to make the descriptions of Mandelstam historically accurate. His Mandelstam is poor, not even having a ruble to give to a street musician, and careless with his words. The real Mandelstam was in fact notorious for the latter quality: his satirical poems about Stalin led to two arrests and finally his death in the GULAGs.

Mandelstam is shown as not only a brilliant poet, but also an ardent critic of the regime, a fearless writer who bemoans the state of his country, and who clearly sees through the charade of the revolution. For the narrator he is not only the famous poet whose works were universally admired, but also one of the few people at the time to dare speak the truth, while knowing that any careless word could well bring about his death. At one point, Nina and Mandelstam, who are taking a walk around Tiflis, are overtaken by three black cars. Nina knows that it is Beria and his henchmen who are driving around, while Mandelstam only suspects that it is a member of the government

> Эти большие черные автомобили... -- проговорил он. Вдруг взгляд его остекленел, он забыл о предложенном объятии. -- Когда я их вижу, что-то такое же большое и черное поднимается со дна души. Меня преследует видение чего-то ужасного, что неминуемо передушит нас всех [. . .] Папироса потухла. Мандельштам стоял, не двигаясь. Даже и здесь, в мирном, докатастрофном углу, на него сквозь ветки посматривал портрет Сталина.
>
> 'These large black automobiles'…he said. Immediately his gaze turned leaden, he forgot about the embrace that had been offered. 'When I see them, something large and black rises from the bottom of the soul. I am hounded by a vision of something terrible, something that will inevitably suffocate all of us.' His cigarette went out. Mandelstam stood, he did not move, even here in the peaceful pre-catastrophic corner, at him staring through the branches was the portrait of Stalin. (1: 213)

Yet Aksyonov accurately points out that Mandelstam is overtaken with a foreshadowing of the events that will overtake the nation as well as himself, he himself was later taken away twice in a large black automobile. He is portrayed as a visionary who saw what would happen to the best and brightest minds of the Soviet Union.

Aksyonov turns his attention to Jewish theatrical figures as well. His characters are habitués of Meyerhold's revolutionary theater. In a telling episode Nikita Gradov, trying to please his wife who does not want to live anywhere but in Moscow, is able to get tickets to a Meyerhold production of a play by Nikolai Erdman, *The Mandate* (I: 104). The play and Meyerhold's theater become literary stops in Aksyonov's narrative journey. He describes Meyerhold and his wife, Zinaida Reich, who have just come back from Europe. The purpose is again to imbue the novel with the flavor of the time and reinsert a Jewish iconography into Russian literature. Aksyonov enters the mind of the great director and theater theoretician who reflects on the stagnation of European drama:

> В театрах Европы полный застой. Дальше Рейнгарда заграница не ушла. Постановки на уровне Малого театра, декорации примитивно реалистические. Полное отсутствие стиля, эксперимента. Не просто боязнь эксперимента, но непонимание его смысла. Даже в Италии упадок. Театр Пиранделло еле влачит существование на субсидиях. (1: 80)

Meyerhold is shown as a theatrical genius who discusses the best theater groups in Europe functioning at the time, Pirandello in Italy and Reinhardt in Germany. (Max Reinhardt, the Austrian-Jewish theater and film director, bridged the three quarters of a century between Aksyonov's *Generations of Winter* and Kaufmann and Hart's *Once in a Lifetime*, and became a symbol of the highest achievements of theater and of cinematography of the 1920s and 1930s for Jewish writers of many countries.) Aksyonov's Meyerhold discusses his admiration of the carnavalesque in Europe; he enjoys its pompous church processions and is completely taken with new jazz from America that is being introduced in Europe, wanting to incorporate all the elements of these new cultural forms in his own work. Like Mandelstam he is a visionary.

Aksyonov's Meyerhold, as his Mandelstam, is at the height of his career. His theatrical productions are considered the best of their kind not only in Moscow but also

throughout Europe. At the same time, just like Mandelstam, Meyerhold sees that the party bureaucracy is beginning to lean on the press which subsequently publishes excoriating reviews about his plays.

> Наша школа провозглашается единственно живым направлением. В этой связи высказывания наших газет о "Ревизоре" выглядят как бездарный заговор смердящей буржуазии. Чего стоят, например, вот такие стишата в "Известиях" [. . .]. (1: 81)

Addressing his colleagues and artists Meyerhold reads to them an epigram published in the paper about his famous staging of the *Inspector General.* The epigram proclaims that Meyerhold "killed Gogol's humor". While the liberals and the opposition are calling his theatrical achievements the cultural representatives of the revolution, the conservative base of the Communist party is already beginning to attack all those who do not conform to the norms of social realism.

Once again Nina Gradova is the character who ties most of these Jewish cultural luminaries together. She is present at the performance not only because Meyerhold is her 'god', but also because she is a Trotskyite, and Meyerhold's plays have taken on a double role, acting as a political stage on which the competing Communist factions are fighting out their differences (1: 114). Nina provides a link between all the Jewish political and cultural figures. While a poetess she is also a young revolutionary, in love with the romanticism of the revolution. She can be at Meyerhold's theater at one moment and agitating for Trotsky the next.

Aksyonov also takes his readers to meet Trotsky, the other Jewish political luminary. Trotsky is seen in a window at one of the rallies during which he attempts to maintain his power as Stalin is slowly taking it away. He is presented when he has almost lost the battle to be a successor to Lenin.

> ‘Ребята, он! Смотрите, Лев Давыдович!’ В окне и в самом деле вновь возник Троцкий. Застыл на мгновение с поднятой рукой, потом начал швырять вниз призывы: ‘Мы за немедленную индустриализацию! Мы за партийную демократию! Товарищи, пламя революции вот-вот охватит Европу и Индию! Китай уже рычит! Бюрократия -- это оковы на ногах мировой революции!’ (1: 162-163)

Yet again Aksyonov presents a famous Jewish figure in the heat of the moment, speaking about something important to him. Although these glimpses of the above mentioned personages lack depth, they are imbued with a feeling for the epoch. Trotsky is speaking out against the bureaucracy of the government and privately bemoaning the fact that he waited too long to take power into his own hands. He realizes that while he had been the de facto successor to Lenin, the tide has turned against him because he could not centralize the power and keep it out of Stalin’s hands.

In fact, Aksyonov was not the first writer to present Russian-Jewish revolutionaries in novelistic form; previous attempts to fictionalize Trotsky, Zinoviev and Litvinov were made in the 1960s. Jakub Blum, who did a study on the figures of Jewish revolutionaries in Russian fiction, writes.

> [. . .] the works we are discussing mention the role of Jews in the October Revolution no less often than that of Russians. The reader is made to realize that they helped the Bolsheviks to power and performed valuable services. But there is something one-sided and schematic about the presentation of these facts….The Jewish ‘professional revolutionaries’ are not shown in the round, developing their individuality and engaged in conflicts; they are personifications of dogma, cardboard figures designed by propaganda to illustrate the system and the reasons for its victory. (Blum J. 38)

The fictionalizations of Trotsky in these works were altogether negative as the writers (Dangulov, Maryagin, Zakrutkin) sought to fit their descriptions into a Stalinist view of history (Blum J. 34-35). Aksyonov’s efforts stand out in that he includes the descriptions of the political figures as part of a cultural movement where Jews were at the vanguard of many spheres of influence, in effect this idea is in concordance with the thesis proposed

by Yuri Slezkine in his work *The Jewish Century*. In this work the latter uses Sholem Aleichem's novella *Tevye the Milkman* (better known as *Fiddler on the Roof*) as a metaphor for Jewish dominance in the three major movements that changed the twentieth century—Marxism, Freudianism and Einstein's theory of relativity (what is missing of course is Darwinism).

Aksyonov points out that already in the 1920s ethnicity was a charged notion, and that the masses retained their anti-Semitic leanings even though they were supposed to become true 'internationalists'. The opposition forces which are rallying on Trotsky's behalf are attacked by a government squadron. "В тыл колонны врезался эскадрон кавалерии. Честные трудящиеся расступались, показывая конникам: 'Это не мы, братцы, это вон там, жидовня!'" (1: 168). The workers who are marching as well identify the opposition, and point them out to the government troops, calling them 'kikes'. This is almost a reverse euphemism in that while calling the opposition 'kikes' is offensive it is also a stand in for 'Trotsky's opposition'.

Nina Gradova, the novel's femme fatale, also has a short lived affair with Ilya Ehrenburg, who, like his American contemporary Hemingway, is covering the war in Spain for the Moscow papers. In Aksyonov's telling, they meet in a restaurant and he reads her his poetry.

> Знаменитый "московский парижанин", поэт и мировой журналист [. . .]. Она увидела его в "Национале" сидящим в одиночестве у окна, с трубкой в зубах, над стаканом коньяку... Она даже споткнулась, как взятая вдруг под уздцы лошадка. "Вон Эренбург, только что из Испании и, конечно же, через Париж […]." Он сидел на подоконнике, смотрел, как всегда, в сторону, читал ей из записной книжки: "Прости, что жил я в том лесу, Что все я пережил и выжил, Что до могилы донесу Большие сумерки Парижа"... Кто-то дал ей понять, что органы буквально ходят по пятам за Эренбургом [. . .]. (1: 374-375)

Again for the purpose of the novel, Ehrenburg is used as a literary figure who after making a colorful appearance, fades into the background. Like the other members of the Jewish cultural elite who figure in the novel, Ehrenburg is not drawn in a way that elaborates on his Jewish identity. For Aksyonov, he is an intriguing figure of his time and his affair with Nina adds piquancy to the narrative by portraying Ehrenburg as a womanizer, smokes cigars, drinks cognac, and is trailed by the NKVD. Again, this depiction furthers the point that for Aksyonov, at least in this novel, Jews serve to illustrate their presence at the cultural vanguard of the first part of the century and by highlighting their achievements against the background of the novel, the writer is able to highlight a certain aspect of the Jewish identity which evidently makes him proud.

THE SUBJECT OF ANTI-SEMITISM

While *Generations of Winter* is largely not a novel devoted to significant Jewish characterizations or even a novel with a Jewish theme, Aksyonov uses it as a staging ground to air his views on anti-Semitism, probing his characters and their baser emotions on this subject.

In one of the more colorful incidents in *The Generations of Winter*, Aksyonov discusses anti-Semitism from the view point of Mitya, the young boy who was adopted by Cecilia Rosenblum and Kirill Gradov. Cecilia is seeing Mitya off to war at the train station, and Aksyonov brilliantly depicts Mitya's inner conflict: he is afraid that his comrades will think that he is Jewish. He has never called Cecilia 'mother' and he searches within himself to figure out if the reason is that she is Jewish:

> Впервые ему пришло в голову, что он, может быть, потому и не называет ее матерью, что она слишком еврейская, что он ее, может быть, даже стыдится. В доме Градовых не было антисемитизма, и в этом духе Митя и

был воспитан, но вдруг вот как бы приоткрылась где-то в глубине какая-то заслонка, и он понял, что ужасно стыдится Цецилии, стыдится перед новыми товарищами, новобранцами, как бы они не подумали, что она его мать[…] Колонна тут же оставила ее позади, только в задних рядах захохотали: "Во ползет еврейка!"

For the first time, maybe it came to him that he didn't call her mother because she was too Jewish, that he, maybe was even ashamed of her. In the Gradov household there was not anti-Semitism, and in this spirit Mitya was raised, but suddenly a little wall opened and he understood, that he is terribly ashamed of Cecilia, ashamed in front of his new comrades, the new draftees. If only they wouldn't think that she was his mother. The column immediately left her behind, only in the last rows there was laughter: 'A Jewess crawling.' (2: 13)

Aksyonov explores the basest feelings that are associated with anti-Semitism, yet he subscribes to his own stereotypes. Mitya was reared in the Gradov household yet his biological parents were peasants, therefore in this moment, when faced with his adopted Jewish mother and his new comrades he sides with them and against the adopted parent. In fact, Aksyonov seems to say that anti-Semitism, at least in this context does not belong to nurture, but to nature. Mitya reverts to his peasant mentality, and forgets all the years spent in the Gradov household. A boy walking next to Mitya asks him:

-- А ты что, Мить, на самом деле из евреев будешь? Митя тут взорвался:- Русский я! На сто процентов русский! Ты что, не видишь? Никакого отношения к этим... к этим... не имею! А эта... эта... просто так, соседка!

'And you Mitya, are you really descended from Jews?' Mitya exploded. 'No, I'm Russian., I'm a hundred per cent Russian. Can't you see for yourself? I have no relation to these…to these…And that is only a neighbor. (2: 13)

This scene acts as an almost Christian archetype. Just as Peter denies Christ three times, so does Mitya deny any relationship to Jews, calling his adopted mother a neighbor. This scene is important as a link to a number of other episodes in the novel where being Jewish is tied to being persecuted and to Aksyonov's own probing of Christ's role as the savior for all the oppressed and humiliated people, discussed in an earlier section.

As in the 'Poem With the End' by Marina Tsvetaeva where she declares, "All poets are Jews in a Christian World", Aksyonov equates the persecution of some of his characters by the regime with the persecutions that Jews have faced historically. Professor Boris Gradov, the patriarch of the Gradov family, begins to think about his fellow doctors, the top Jewish specialists of the Soviet Union, many of whom had treated Stalin personally, and realizes that their disappearance and arrest is repression on ethnic grounds. This brief episode is Aksyonov's treatment of the 'Doctors' Plot', when members of the Jewish medical elite were arrested and accused of poisoning members of the Politburo and plotting to poison Stalin.

> Арестован профессор Геттингер, куда-то пропал, а стало быть, скорее всего, тоже арестован, профессор Трувси, изгнан с кафедры и ждет ареста профессор Шейдеман... Что все это значит и почему все пострадавшие -- евреи? Если это имеет отношение к уничтожению Еврейского антифашистского комитета, к исчезновению десятков, если не сотен еврейских интеллигентов, не значит ли это, что теперь и медицину пытаются пристегнуть к антикосмополитической, антисемитской кампании? Однако я-то тут при чем, ведь я не еврей, думал он, и тут же его продирала дрожь позора. Жаль, что я не еврей, думал он. Я хотел бы быть евреем, чтобы избежать двусмысленности. Для этих бесов всякий российский интеллигент должен быть евреем, потому что -- чужой!
>
> Professor Gettinger is arrested, Professor Truvsi has disappeared and its most likely that he is also arrested, Professor Scheideman has been expelled from the faculty and is expecting arrest…What does all this mean and why are all the casualties Jewish? If this relates to the elimination of the Jewish Anti-fascist Committee, to the disappearance of dozens if not hundreds of Jewish intellectuals, doesn't this mean that medicine is also being tied to the anti-cosmpolitan, anti-Semitic campaign? But how am I involved in this, I'm not a Jew, he thought, and immediately a shudder of shame passed through him. Pity, that I'm not a Jew, he thought. I would like to have been a Jew to escape the uncertainty. For these demons every Russian intellectual must be a Jew, because he's foreign. (3: 263)

Gradov has been made to compromise his profession and participate in the murder of Politburo member Frunze from chloroform poisoning during a routine operation. He feels that to maintain his integrity and seek forgiveness for his participation in the violent and

bloody Soviet regime he wishes to be a Jew so that he could atone for his sins. Once again, the figure of a Jew becomes for Aksyonov and for Boris Gradov the epitome of the unjustly persecuted.

This part of the plot provides an important explanation for why Aksyonov did not write a novel where the central characters were Jewish. *Generations of Winter* is quite similar in plot and structure to Grossman's *Life and Fate*, and, like Boris Gradov who is a famous doctor, Shtrum is a famous physicist. In *Generations of Winter*, Gradov participates in the death of General Frunze, but then promises to stay true to himself and not bend to the regime even if he is arrested or killed for it. Later when the time comes for Gradov to sign the papers condemning the killer doctors, he refuses. In Grossman's much earlier novel, Shtrum does not refuse to sign a similar letter. It is possible that Aksyonov was altering a similar plot (Grossman's novel was one of the most significant works to be banned at home and published abroad, as a dissident Aksyonov must have been aware of it), and to make it quite different he could not have another central Jewish figure around whom to build the novel.

CONCLUSION

Aksyonov, who wrote reviews of American literature, was also interested in American Jewish writers, having written a review of J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. A book of essays called *Soviet Criticism of American Literature* in the 1960s reprints Aksyonov's article about the novel, he writes "Holden Caulfield, Buddy and Seymour Glass, the foggy Walt of Eloise's reminiscences—of the (possible) symbols of Salinger's personality (I can't imagine any other), these have formed an image which has eyes brimming with Jewish melancholy" (13). Edward Brown in the *Russian Review* describes Aksyonov's view of the novel as stereotypical,

> and Aksyonov, who learned from Salinger, is not much better: the heroes "symbolic" of Salinger's personality have "eyes brimming with Jewish melancholy", a phrase which betrays a mind unconsciously in thrall to cliché. Of course "American melancholy" wouldn't do at all; it's not the expected verbal combination: "melancholy" can only go with "Slavic" or "Jewish," sometimes with Irish. Essentially similar clichés are used by Soviet anti-Semites with the opposite effect, and it's almost offensive to find one in a serious critical article. (Russian Review 106)

The writer is right to notice that Aksyonov has to resort to clichés to describe Jewish writing. As has been shown here, a literary culture devoid of references to Jewish subjects will almost certainly breed writers who even with good intentions have trouble not only creating an unbiased Jewish character but also speaking about Jewish literature in a way that reinforces positive imagery and not stereotypes. Aksyonov's choice to write on Salinger is noteworthy in that that he chose a writer who is emblematic of the 1950s generation in America, a writer who was also part Jewish like Aksyonov himself, and whose major protagonists like Aksyonov's Tolya von Steinbok were also half-Jewish (Salinger told his daughter that all his characters were partially Jewish) (Garrett 653).

Another work of American-Jewish writing that Aksyonov engaged in was E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* which he translated into Russian. Doctorow, like Aksyonov, uses famous Jewish historical figures to buttress his fictional landscape in Ragtime; these include Harry Houdini, Emma Goldman, and Sigmund Freud. Undoubtedly, Aksyonov found much in common with a writer he admired and whom he chose to translate.

In conclusion, both Ginzburg and Aksyonov deserve not to be left out of the Russian-Jewish canon. The mother and son pair provide a perfect example of writers grappling with the problematic of Jewish identity in a country that was adversely disposed to members of this ethnicity. In their own way, each writer treated the subject of Jewish identity even as they struggled to distance themselves from it. Ginzburg, in idealizing the perfect Russian peasant, is reminiscent of Clarice Lispector, who chose

Brazilian identity over her own immigrant background. Aksyonov, on the other hand, belonging to a later generation, attempts to resuscitate Russian Jewish writing by inserting into his novels on the GULAGs and on the Stalinist epoch important Jewish historical characters.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation I had posited that hyphenated Jewish writers who de-thematized their Jewish identity in their texts perpetrated an authorial passing not strictly because of their aesthetic leanings but rather as a direct causation of the negative condition of the Jew in western civilization. In this dissertation I have shown that the writers under consideration did not remove themselves from the ethnic fold in their art because of the limitations imposed by the Jewish culture itself, rather by the pressure that the hegemonic community-- because of its own ethnocentrism—imposed on members of the out-group. The purpose of this dissertation was to show that since the de-thematization of ethnicity was imposed as a result of outside forces, these writers should be restored to the study of Jewish literature, and should be included in the Jewish canon.

This dissertation shows that in fact the political atmosphere directly influenced the role ethnicity played in authors' works. The study points out, that political considerations played a heavy role in the extraction of ethnicity from the texts, and their subsequent similarities and differences in choice of subject matter, plot, and style. In America, the period before World War II created a complex social and political environment for American and especially New York City Jews. The 1910s and 1920s encouraged multiculturalism and an embrace of the American melting pot, but the financial crisis in the late 1920s and early 1930s precipitated a downturn which led to nativism, separatism, and a good measure of xenophobia. While Jewish producers, musicians and writers were not only prevalent on Broadway in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, but arguably dominated the scene in those time periods, like Hollywood producers, the Broadway purveyors of culture felt that because of their not quite

"American" profile they could not display an overtly Jewish thematic on the legitimate stage. The material that American-Jewish dramatists were creating was meant to be shown to a mainstream American audience. Kaufman and Hart allowed the uncertainty and instability of the 1930s and 1940s to seep into their works. As this dissertation has shown while most Americans were greatly affected by the Great Depression, American-Jews were to some extent placed in a volatile environment by the added factor of Hitler's rise in Germany, suggesting that the same anti-Semitic laws could gain traction in the US as well. The perversion of the American Dream becomes for many American-Jews a viable reality in the 1930s and 1940s and this is directly evident in Kaufman and Hart's plays that explore the different variants of a deviant American Dream; specifically this is shown in *Merrily We Roll Along* and *The American Way*. The latter play also provides a visible display of American patriotism; at a time when every American-Jew needed to have a façade of national loyalty—Kaufman and Hart wrote a play about a German immigrant who sacrifices himself to defeat the homegrown Nazi threat.

Similarly, the dictatorial rule of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, from 1930-1945 (he also ruled democratically from 1951-1954), led to an era of nationalism, populism, and assimilationism. Specifically in the case of Clarice Lispector, (as writer Moacyr Scliar noted in an email to me) to some extent her marriage to a member of the Brazilian diplomatic community forced her to self-censor the ethnic factor in her works. This dissertation has tried to prove that tenuous link between Clarice's place in the diplomatic community with her attitude towards ethnicity in her work: by showing that the diplomatic community was arguably one of the only communities in Brazil to be directly in contact with Brazilian anti-Jewish immigration laws, anti-Semitic government policies and aware of secret circulars which were keeping Jews out of Brazil.

Immediately after the creation of the Soviet Union, the prevailing political ideology encouraged ethnic differences, and this resulted (for the Jewish segment of the population) in a large number of publications in Yiddish. At the same time, and for the first time in Russian history, Jews were allowed to become fully integrated into society, as a number of quotas were lifted allowing migration into cities and education in universities. This relative freedom lasted no more than twenty years, when, at the height of Stalinism, quotas on Jews in universities, and in certain professions, began to be imposed again. So while in the first period of Soviet life, Soviet-Jewish writers might have left their ethnicity out of their works owing to a need to assimilate and experience oneself as a true Soviet person with no ethnic markings, in the second period of Soviet life, it is most probable that Jewish writers were unable to publish outwardly ethnic-in-character works due to persecution and anti-Semitism. By tracing the history of censorship of Soviet-Jewish literature, this dissertation shows that writers were constantly forced to self-censor ethnicity. This led to a situation where almost no literature with a Jewish thematic was being published after a while, and if such a thematic was published it was often written as a caricature of that ethnicity. Furthermore, almost all literature dealing with Jewish issues was at one point taken out of Soviet libraries and bookstores, so writers had no access to anything that might set a precedent for their own depiction of ethnicity. In the case of Ginzburg, this study has tried to show that she was most affected by the internationalist ideals of the Komsomol youth, and tried to consider and write the majority of her characters apart from their ethnicity. Aksyonov who returns to the subject of Jewish ethnicity, attempts to fill in blanks or spaces that his mother left out of her memoir, or that had been left out of the telling of Soviet culture, but cannot write a non-caricatured description of Jewish personages. But this dissertation argues that Aksyonov's attempts are caricatured not because of a negative feeling towards his Jewish

background, but because there is a miniscule literary precedent for writing non-biased, ethnically Jewish characters in Soviet literature. In fact, one can say that in *The Burn*, with its half-Jewish protagonist, Aksyonov was one of the first writers to begin reinventing Russian-Jewish literature after it had been wiped out under Stalin.

Furthermore, this study asks whether the need to assimilate was primarily political, or stemmed from an intrinsic need to fulfill a literary goal of situating oneself in the mainstream. The historical part in each chapter shows that the goal of assimilation was so great in America, Russia and Brazil that even when basic rights were no longer denied, writers embraced a shared mainstream culture which superseded their own backgrounds as ethnic Jews. On the process of assimilation Paula E. Hyman writes

> The first steps, often called acculturation, include the acquisition of the basic markers of the larger society, such as language, dress, and the more amorphous category of 'values.' The integration of minority-group members into the majority institutions follows, with the attendant weakening of minority institutions. The end point of assimilation is the dissolution of the minority by biological merger with the majority through intermarriage. For assimilation to proceed to its last stages, two mutually reinforcing factors must be present: the desire of the minority to become like and to join the majority and the receptivity of the majority to the participation of minority-group members in its midst. (13)

A need for assimilation is evident in each of the writers present here, they each sought to tear themselves away from their background and distinguish themselves through their writing, and their ability to manipulate the national language of their country, to exemplify in this writing the universal man, who might be ethnic but never Jewish. Using Gilman's theory of the effect the majoritarian language has on Jewish identity, I have shown that a number of the authors addressed in this dissertation cemented their place in the hegemonic culture by proving that they were the owners of that language, by constantly manipulating it and proving their mastery in it. Other markers of assimilation are present in the biographies of these writers, Ginzburg and

Lispector married outside of their ethnically Jewish community. And all of the writers discussed in this dissertation expressed a need to become full-fledged citizens in the majoritarian group. To assimilate visibly as members of the hegemonic group they underwent an ethnic passing, not in their private lives where they maintained close relationships with friends and relatives from the Jewish community, but in their works which would reach a mass audience.

As authors they passed for members of the hegemonic literary culture. These writers were limited in what they could write simply because of the social circles that they revolved in, or had revolved in as in the case of Ginzburg and Clarice. Each of the writer pairs belonged to an elite community. Kaufman and Hart were arguably the most successful playwrights in America in the 1930s and 1940s, their social circle included a similar cultural elite. Clarice was married to a diplomat at a time when Brazilian diplomats were not allowed to marry non-Brazilians, and also a time when the Brazilian diplomatic community was quite anti-Semitic. This forced her to be circumspect at displaying her Jewish identity or informing others of it. Similarly, Ginzburg also spent the first part of her life in elite government circles, her husband Aksyonov was what in Soviet times would have been the equivalent of a mayor in the city of Kazan, this post allowed them to socialize and vacation with the ruling elite of Tatarstan. I claim that the conditioning that an elite hegemonic community imposes on its members increased the pressure on and forced these writers to de-Judaize their texts.

In the fiction, non-fiction and dramatic works produced by the writers covered in this dissertation, the writers perpetrated an ethnic passing by extracting all visible ethnic markers. At the same time, as this dissertation has argued, visible ethnic markers should not and do not define what constitutes a work of Jewish literature. In my redefinition of Jewish literature, I use Memmi's classification of the make-up of a Jewish person; among

other notions, collaboration and the community of family are two of the concepts which become paramount in my own work. I argue that collaboration and the community of family were intrinsic to the life and subsequently work of the writers discussed here. Kaufman and Hart chose actively to collaborate with each other on eight plays, but outside of this they also became the closest friends. Hart's biography *Act One*, considered by many in the theater world to be the most famous non-fiction text to document the Broadway scene of the 1920s and 1930s, might not be dedicated to Kaufman (it is dedicated to Hart's wife Carlisle) in name but in every other way the memoir is about Kaufman. Roughly half of it details the Kaufman and Hart collaboration, and in more ways than one explains the great debt that Hart owed to Kaufman throughout his career: for taking him on as a fledgling writer and introducing him to the American cultural elite of the time. Hart writes, "If it is possible for a book of this sort to have a hero, then that hero is George S. Kaufman" (281).

In fact, this collaboration extends to our present day as well, as I have noted earlier Woody Allen was inspired in many ways by the Kaufman and Hart plays. But his most recent creation, the movie *Midnight in Paris*, directly references *Act One*. In the film the main character vacationing in present-day Paris is transported to the Paris of the lost generation, the 1920s, he visits a party where he socializes with Salvatore Dali, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda. Hart describes a strikingly similar scene the first time he is allowed to commune with Kaufman's friends at the playwright's house,

> Everyone I had ever read about or hero-worshipped from afar seemed to be contained within my awestruck gaze, from Ethel Barrymore and Harpo Marx to Heywood Broun and Edna Ferber, from Helen Hayes and George Gershwin to F.P.A. and Alexander Woollcott—as though some guardian angel of the stage-struck had waved a wand and assembled a galaxy luminous enough to make the most insatiable hero-worshipper's hair stand on end. [. . .]

> At the far end of the room someone began to play the piano, and though I could not see who was at the keyboard, I knew it was probably George Gershwin. (293-294)

While Woody Allen does not use the magic-wand shtick in his movie—he uses what I will call a time-car (a 1920s automobile which transports the protagonist in time)—and instead of Gershwin at the piano Allen places Cole Porter, but the effect is the same. Allen, whose actual family name was Konigsberg, does not shy away from authorial passing (the majority of his movies have at their core the gentile "other" while continuing to explore Jewish sexuality and tropes in films where the protagonist is played by himself), at the same time he is completely aware of the influences which comprise the Jewish need to pass and this comes out in his work. Allen's film *Zelig* (1983) about a chameleon-like man who can pass for members of any community is a remarkable metaphor for the condition of passing. Allen, is the present-day inheritor of Kaufman and Hart's collaborative ouevre, in fact almost half a century after their death he continues to use their themes in his work.

The idea of collaboration as intertextuality is present in the works of Clarice and Elisa Lispector. In their letters they are constantly referencing the need to read each other's works. Clarice writes,

> Quanto ao livro sei que nós não podemos ler os livros uma da outra como critic, mas sempre como irmã. As to the book, I know that we cannot read each other's works as critics but always as sisters. (*Correspondências* 49)

> Estou ansiosa por ver seu livro publicado e por receber uma exemplar minha Leinha. I am anxious to see your book published and to receive a copy, my Leinha (*Correspondências* 78)

This collaboration in reading each-others' works and commenting on them, is critically important to this study where all the writers in a sense worked with a complete understanding of the other's contribution to literature. Similarly in Ginzburg and

Aksyonov's case, Ginzburg references her son as her first reader and Aksyonov mentions his mother in passing in one novel and fills in the history of her Jewish background in another novel. Neither Clarice nor Ginzburg wrote overtly ethnically tinged work, but because they were members of other literary families, the negative space that they endowed their work with was filled in by their family members.

Furthermore, the collaboration between a larger community of Jewish artists and writers is also important for all of the cases reviewed here. Kaufman and Hart surrounded themselves representatives of the American-Jewish cultural elite: Franklin P. Adams, George Gershwin, Edna Ferber, Dorothy Parker, the Marx brothers, Kurt Weill, Dore Schary and many others. Clarice was close friends with a group of Brazilian-Jewish artists Carlos Scliar and Pedro Bloch, and she worked at several magazines *Senhor* and *Jornal do Brasil* many of whose journalists were Jewish. Similarly, Ginzburg's close friends Lev Kopelev and Raisa Orlova, the Soviet-Jewish dissident couple, were the only friends of hers (according to my research) to publish reminiscences about her.

Memmi notes that another defining characteristic of Jewish identity is the moment when the outside world labels one a Jew,

> Neither the Jewish will to live, nor solidarity, nor belonging to Jewry, are the results of a free choice. A man is not a Jew because he decides to be one: he discovers that he is a Jew, then he either consents or refuses…without ceasing to be one. Of course he is a Jew in a different way depending on his refusal or his approval, but in any case he is still a Jew. (Memmi 287)

This dissertation traces the exact instances when every one of the writers mentioned here experienced such a moment, when their Jewishness—their outside status became a stark reality. Kaufman and Clarice experienced a similar journalistic trajectory, at first hired at their respective posts because of their Jewish colleagues (Franklin P. Adams got Kaufman a job at the Washington *Times* and Nahum Sirotsky, et. al. helped Clarice get a

job at *Senhor*), and both were let go of their jobs as journalists because they were Jews (this is explained in more detail in the individual chapters). All the other writers also experienced such moments, Ginzburg mentions the fifth point in her memoirs, Elisa talks about the anti-Semitism of the Cossacks, etc. This biographical tracing points out that no matter the level of assimilation that these writers experienced and their self-removal from a Jewish narrative in their works, in their personal lives they never ceased to remember the ethnic community they belonged to. Anti-Semitism, directly or indirectly influenced all of them and is certainly a factor in defining their narrative choices.

Finally, in examining the works that these writers produced this dissertation has demonstrated that while there might not be overt references to Jewish ethnicity in the majority of these works, there are themes and elements that were crucial to Jewish identity at the time that these writers were creating their works. In the 1930s and 1940s Kaufman and Hart focus their plays on issues relevant to the family dynamic, while this yet again refers back to Memmi's thesis of family importance to Jewish identity, it also points to the importance of family for New York City Jews during the Great Depression, and to the authors' own strong family nuclei. Furthermore, in *Once in a Lifetime* Kaufman and Hart attempt to chronicle the Jewish participation in Hollywood and subsequently in the American mass culture of the 1920s. Similarly, Aksyonov does the same thing for famous Soviet-Jewish personalities like Trotsky, Mandelstam, Radek, et. al., in *Generations of Winter*. Kaufman and Hart, as well as Aksyonov are reduced to stereotype their Jewish characters—their portrayal of the physicality of the Jewish body never strays from caricature or a projection of the hegemonic view of the Jewish body; nevertheless, their attempts seem to be an homage to the Jewish contribution to hegemonic culture. On the other hand, Ginzburg rarely ventures to describe the ethnicity of her characters; she endows her own personage with the mantle of Russian identity and

ethnicity simply because her interpretation of Russian culture, her recitation of poetry, etc., defines her as a Russian. Clarice on the other hand projects her ethnicity onto her Afro-Brazilian and northeastern characters, who at once represent her marginal status as a Jew and her impoverished childhood in the northeast.

In conclusion we can see that in all three cases presented here of the United States, Brazil, and Russia the Jewish writers had to grapple with their unavoidable ethnic identities as a result of the pressure exerted by the majoritarian community. They were subsequently forced to conform to the assimilationist and acculturationist tendencies that the hegemonic culture exacted from them. The result of this was that in their public lives and specifically in their writing they began to exhibit universalistic tendencies which showed that the writers accepted the majority culture as the universal culture. In their methodology the writers used a de-ethnicized presentation which never betrayed the authors' origins. Thus the term authorial passing connotes that writers did not de-thematize their texts for solely aesthetic purposes but in order to participate fully in the hegemonic culture, while avoiding the liminal spaces and pitfalls that a minority culture in the process of assimilation imposes on its members.

What was only a hypothesis in the introduction has been proven a fact. All the writers looked at in this thesis lived during the same time span, a period of time in twentieth century world history where anti-Semitism was at its apogee in western civilization; precisely because of this negative condition this was also the height of Jewish efforts to transition from what many saw as the very particularistic Jewish culture to the universal culture of their home state. This dissertation has shown that Jews are the prototype of the condition of passing, but this condition is not limited to them only. In fact, the condition of passing and authorial passing will linger for as long as there exist out-groups and minorities who continue to experience adverse treatment in the west.

At the core of this thesis is a tragic ethical element which points out that in the majority of the cases of authorial passing were people who could not write on any topic they chose. In their writing these authors cannibalized the hegemonic culture, and therefore passed as purveyors and owners of that same culture; at the same time, while they achieved aesthetic success in their art, it came at the cost of their deleterious condition as Jews inhabiting an adverse hegemonic culture. Creating inside the inherited structures they were never able to destroy those structures and erect their own. Their examples, in fact, offer a wider perspective on the boundaries of western culture and civilization which often limits the possible creative narratives to those which are for the most part acceptable to the hegemonic culture.

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